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DOLORES SHRANK CROUCHING IN A CORNER WITH TERROR-STRIKEN EYES.

MRS. ESMOND'S GOVERNESS.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"A WONDERFUL voice, Carew! Where did you pick her up?"

And the Hon. Edward Dalrymple, who had come with his lady-mother—sorely against his will—to help to declare a village bazaar open, and who had shown himself terribly bored with the proceedings hitherto, roused from his apathy, and stared at a young lady who had just finished a song with no small interest.

His companion was the curate—overworked and underpaid, as those unlucky pillars of the church very often are. Jocelyn Carew had worked like a slave over this bazaar, and was almost tired out, now that it was fairly afoot, and the ladies at the various stalls doing their

utmost to extract everything they could from the pockets of their friends.

He had been the principal worker in the affair from the beginning. He had arranged everything, and settled the programme of the various amusements that were to supplement the attractions of the stalls.

Not much of the credit was given to him by the smartly-dressed daughters of the Vicar, who went about pointing out what they had done and suggested, quite forgetting that Jocelyn Carew had been their right hand and willing slave in all things.

He was in the minority to-day. The Countess of Underhill and her son and daughter were their guests, and had actually lunched at the Vicarage before coming to the schoolrooms, where the bazaar was held, and Mr. Dalrymple had been very pleasant and attentive.

The curate was all very well when there was no one else to flirt with and order about; but he was only the curate, after all.

"I don't know!" Jocelyn Carew replied to

the question so abruptly put. He and Edward Dalrymple had been college acquaintances—so they had foregathered—after the latter had made his duty round of the stalls, and purchased all sorts of useless and perishable articles.

"You don't know!"

"I don't. I never saw her before to my knowledge. Miss Esmond was to have sung just now. She has a sweet voice; but nothing like that."

The young lady he had spoken of must have had a marvellous voice, indeed, if she could have surpassed the one which had just filled the rooms with such melody as had never been heard in them before, and the singer was as striking as her song.

To his dying day his first sight of the singer remained indelibly fixed in the memory of Jocelyn Carew, associated with the scent of the roses that bloomed round and above her—for the platform, with the piano, where the singers appeared, was close by the flower-stall, which

was a mass of fragrant blossoms and delicate greenery.

The girl—a total stranger to almost everyone in the crowded room—stood there for a moment, a rare picture against a background of green, looking amongst the village notabilities like a creature of another world.

The curate stared at her like a man in a dream, though he could scarcely have told what she was like if he had been asked.

To him she was an angel—a creature of another sphere—a gorgeous vision of dark eyes, rippling hair, and roses.

To more matter-of-fact people she was a beautiful girl, tall and slight, with a singular grace and ease of movement. Her eyes were dark and lustrous, and her hair almost black.

She was very simply dressed in a white gown without any ornament save a broad mesh of deep yellow, and she had a great cluster of roses of the same colour at her throat.

She had taken off her hat as she stepped on the little platform. It was large and heavy, she said, and her hair fell back from her face, and was coiled on her shapely head in what looked a careless and artistic fashion, but which was really the result of considerable labour, and took a long time to achieve.

The applause that followed her song was hardly over when a fiery-looking lady, very hot and red in the face, came up to the curate, holding the girl—for she appeared little more—by the hand.

"Oh, Mr. Carew!" she said, "I have been looking for the Vicar everywhere to apologise to him. I cannot find him; he must have gone to the Vicarage."

"I think he has, Mrs. Emmond," the young man replied. "Shall I fetch him for you?"

"Oh, no, thank you! It was only to apologise for Maud's not singing. Poor child, she has such a cold, and Miss Williamson kindly offered to fill up the gap. She is my little girl's new governess. Miss Williamson—Mr. Carew. I hope I have not frightened your friend away!"

"I don't think Daisy is really frightened," Jocelyn Carew said, hardly knowing that he replied at all, so absorbed was he by the beauty of the girl who stood silently at Mrs. Emmond's side.

"Dear me, was that Mr. Daisy?" that lady said, in a great flutter. To have been so near the son of the great lady, and not have made his acquaintance in the interests of her daughter was provoking, to say the least of it.

"That is Lady Underhill's son," the curate replied, looking at the governess the while, and thinking how little like a person called "Williamson" she looked.

There was the air of high-breeding and culture about her, and she looked as if the "blood of all the Howards" flowed in her veins.

"I had no idea we had such talent in the neighbourhood!" he said, awkwardly. "Have you been here long, Miss Williamson? I did not know—"

"That Mrs. Emmond had a new governess!" the girl replied, in a low, sweet voice that seemed to thrill the curate's heart through and through.

"I dare say not. I only came last night. I suppose the advent of a paid dependent in any family is not heralded by a flourish of trumpets. If it had not been for the accident of Miss Emmond's cold—and she has one, I assure you, Briarfield would have probably been ignorant of my existence—till Sunday, at any rate."

She looked like a young queen, as she stood there talking to him; by the side of the vulgar woman who had introduced her as her children's governess.

Mr. Carew knew something of the children in question, and that any governess serving in that house was to be pitied.

"You have given us an exquisite treat, Miss Williamson," he said, as Mrs. Emmond turned away to speak to a friend. "I hope to hear more of that magnificent voice!"

"Oh! I don't talk as if I were Patti and Nilsson and all the rest of them rolled into one," she replied, laughing and showing a set of teeth like ivory. "Of course I sing; I can't help it, my voice is part of my existence, but I have not

been taught much, and it is nothing to make a fuss about. How strange this place and these people all look to me! I wonder if I shall suit Mrs. Emmond!"

"I should think you would suit anybody," Jocelyn Carew said, warmly. "I—I beg your pardon. I mean that it is not often that—"

"I don't think you quite know what you do mean," the girl replied, laughing, "except to make kind speeches to a forlorn stranger, and try to set her at her ease. It is nice to find some one that will speak good-naturedly to one in a strange land."

She held out her hand, small and well-gloved, as she spoke; and he took it in his own, and pressed it gently, his heart beating so at the odd fascination in her eyes that he could not find words to speak to her. She was so unaffected, so simple in her manner, that she almost overawed him with her frankness. The young ladies of Briarfield were so very ceremonious in their treatment of him, and so watchful of one another, lest any one of them should get further into his good graces than her companions, that he rarely grew intimate with any of them. Dolores Williamson was not one of these. He was at ease with her the moment he found his voice again, and was able to still the rapid beating of his heart as he looked at her.

"They say all governesses get up a flirtation with the curate," she said, still standing by his side, and watching the moving groups that were flitting about the different stalls. "I suppose it is because no one else thinks us worth a moment's attention."

"Here is someone coming to pay you some attention, I am sure," Mr. Jocelyn said, as the Vicar, with the great lady of the day and her son, and a party of friends, came bustling through the bazaar to where they stood.

"We have come to beg you to sing again," the Vicar said, kindly. "Introduce me, Carew, will you? I did not catch the young lady's name from Mrs. Emmond just now."

The introduction was made, and the great folks gathered round the girl, begging for another song, while the curate stood by, feeling as if he had lost her.

"I am going mad," he said to himself. "No woman that I ever met in my life before ever made me feel like this! Is there witchcraft in the world still, I wonder! I must not see too much of Mrs. Emmond's governess."

"I don't know any new songs," he heard her say. "My songs are all old-fashioned; everybody knows them."

"Everybody has not heard you sing them!" the Vicar said, and his curate felt as if he should like to rush at him and knock him down. What business had he to pay her compliments like that!

"Dolores! What a pretty name!" he muttered. He had read it from the piece of music she had laid down at the conclusion of her song. "Dolores! Bah! I am going crazy; I must be. I will go away when I have heard her again, and I will not see her any more."

Not a new song, certainly; the girl did not look like one to whom the rapid drawing-room ditties of the day would be familiar, nor exactly a lady's song either, as ladies sing nowadays. The room seemed to ring with melody as she sent out the full beauty of her magnificent voice in the "Harp that once through Tara's halls."

People listened spell-bound, and when she had finished there was a moment's pause, and then a storm of applause that made the building ring. Briarfield was not used to such music. A few feeble voices, trained by a schoolmaster, who was leader of the choir in a little church, and two or three tolerable performers on the piano, made up the musical strength of the village.

Jocelyn Carew did not get a chance of another word with Dolores that afternoon. Mrs. Emmond, who was not receiving as much attention as she thought was her due, and whose over-dressed and fussy daughter was being completely overlooked by reason of her cold, and the superior attraction of her sister's governess, bustled up

to her and took her away before she had time to receive the congratulations of those around her.

"I had no idea it would take up all your afternoon, Miss Williamson," the Curate heard her say, with considerable asperity, "or I should not have permitted such an exhibition. Perhaps, now that you have really finished—if you have—"

"I have finished," the girl replied, quietly. "What do you wish me to do?"

"Look after the children a little, if you please. They are fidgeting me and Miss Emmond very much."

"Little imp!" so flouted the Curate, as he glanced at two loud-voiced, long-legged girls who were wandering about, conspicuous by their over-dressing and their unruly behaviour. "What can a refined girl like her do with them?"

Miss Williamson looked towards the corner, where her charges were giving no small trouble by pulling things about at an attractive stall, and smiled slightly.

"I am afraid I shall have to ask you to speak to the young ladies," she said. "This is my first day with them, and—"

"It is best to begin as you mean to go on," Mrs. Emmond said, sourly. "Come with me, please."

They went together, and in a very little while Jocelyn Carew saw the governess and her pupils leave the bazaar. The girl's head was bowed and her cheeks were flushed as if that five minutes with her employer had not been comfortable ones; and there was a smugness about the lady's manner afterwards that showed a stirred-up temper.

Both she and her daughter had been taken by surprise, and were terribly annoyed at the success of the stranger.

Dolores Williamson had come to them with a recommendation from a City firm with whom Mr. Emmond did business, and her musical and vocal abilities had been spoken very highly of.

Maud Emmond's sore throat and loss of voice, which were not enough to lay her up, but which totally incapacitated her from taking any part in the bazaar concert, had led to the offer of the new-comer's services.

Mrs. Emmond had no idea that it would be anything but an ordinary girlish exhibition, and was provoked beyond measure at the rare beauty of the voice and the thorough training that had been given to it.

"Why did you allow her to exhibit herself in that fashion, mamma?" Maud Emmond said, when the little girls and their governesses were fairly on their way home. "She will be as vain as a peacock after this; and that ridiculous dress, too. She sets up for a beauty, I suppose!"

"We will soon alter that," the lady said, decisively. "I am not going to have any eccentricities in my house, I can tell you, child. Don't be afraid of her, child. She shall not outshine you."

"Afraid of her! Absurd!"

Words will hardly convey the intense scorn of Miss Emmond's face and tone as she uttered the words, and she was hardly civil to the great lady and her son, who came up to them presently in company with the Vicar to ask if Miss Williamson had left the bazaar.

"My governess has taken her pupils home," Mrs. Emmond said, and Lady Underhill expressed her regret that she had not seen the young lady to tell her how pleased she was with her songs; and Mrs. Emmond's day was spoiled, and she resolved to be very strict with this governess of hers if she resolved to keep her.

The dark-eyed governess walking home with the two unruly children was outwardly calm, but her heart was a raging tempest for all that.

"I can wait," she said to herself, "and I will. I am a revelation to this sleepy place, I can see that. My last chance I said it was. We shall see. I will make more chances for myself yet. Dolores Williamson! I had better been plain Mary or Nancy, or something more on a level with these good folks. Who is that pale-faced curate, I wonder! I shall have an ally in him, whatever happens, I could see that in a moment. Is he an awfully good young man, I wonder, or

be worldly enough to have a heart and blood instead of milk-and-water! I think he is. I wonder, too, what my mistress (that's the word, I suppose) will have to say to me when she comes home! Something withering, I expect. I saw it in her spiteful eyes when she dragged me off to those brats! Ugh! I should like to strangle them! I think I could find it in my heart to do it. How can anyone like children, I wonder! I suppose their mothers do, or they would never be allowed to live. Someone must have thought it worth their while to bring me up, for instance. Well, dear, what is it?"

The question was addressed to the youngest of her charges, who had come to her side, and was regarding her curiously.

"I don't want anything," the child said. "I was looking at you."

"So I saw, dear! Why?"

"You look like the wolf in Red Riding Hood," the child replied. "I don't like you."

CHAPTER II.

"MISS WILLIAMSON, I wish to speak to you, if you please. I may as well do it to-night."

"If you please, madam."

Dolores Williamson, sitting alone in the shabby apartment considered good enough for a school-room at the *Villa*, as Mr. Emmond's house was called, lifted her head as her employer assailed into the room, looking irate and excited. Mrs. Emmond was tired and cross, but she resolved, as she told her daughter, "To have it out with that girl" before she did anything else. So she had only removed her bonnet, and stood there bristling in all her fiery, hot-and-flustered. The governess had taken off the white dress in which she had appeared at the bazaar, and substituted a neat grey house dress without the slightest ornament, but so beautifully made and fitted that every fold seemed full of grace, giving a patrician look to the slight girl, who rose for a moment, as her employer entered, and sat down again when Mrs. Emmond had flounced into a chair.

"I am by no means sure that you will suit me, Miss Williamson," the lady said, in an irate tone.

"I shall be sorry to think that, of course," the girl replied, with outward calmness, whatever she felt at the announcement. "But you will pardon me if I say that as yet you have had no opportunity of judging of my capabilities. I have scarcely commenced my duties. We do not know each other."

"I do not allude to your capabilities in any way. You would have hardly been recommended to me as you have been if you were not capable, as far as teaching is concerned. It is not that. Your manners, your dress, your style altogether, are not what they ought to be."

"Will you kindly tell me in what I have been so unfortunate as to incur your displeasure?" Miss Williamson asked, speaking without the slightest show of resentment or alarm. "I should be sorry to think I had done so in the first few hours."

Mrs. Emmond grew very red. She was at a disadvantage. She always got flustered when she was annoyed; and this girl, who ought in the proper order of things to have been terribly afraid of her as cool as if she was talking with her own mother on the most indifferent subjects, her own mother on the most indifferent subjects.

"I—I didn't say I was displeased, exactly," she said hurriedly. "But there are one or two things. You hardly seem to know how a governess should comport herself. You do not speak to me with the respect due to an employer. There is a brusquerie and independence about you that is not becoming."

"If you will give me a little time, madam, I have no doubt I shall learn. I have hitherto been on terms of perfect equality with those around me, and perhaps I forget that it is not the same here."

"And your manners are more like those of a professional than a private person. You put yourself forward too much."

"If you are alluding to my singing this after-

noon, madam, I did that at your own request, as far as the first song went; and at the solicitation of the clergyman—was it not?—and his friends in the second instance. You can hardly blame me much there. If you wish it, my voice shall be silent for the future as long as I remain in your establishment."

"You are here to give my daughters lessons in singing, and not to display yourself publicly. You will remember that in future."

"In future I will endeavour to obey you as far as I can, madam. Is there anything else?"

"Yes. And while we are on these subjects I may as well speak. Your style of dress will not suit me, unless you alter it."

"My dress, madam?"

"Just so."

"What is the matter with it? I could not well wear anything simpler than this!"

She glanced down at her exquisite fitting dress as she spoke, with a little smile, and waited for Mrs. Emmond to go on.

"Well, no. There is nothing to object to in that dress, except, perhaps, that it is too stylish in make for a governess; but this afternoon everybody was staring at you. You looked so—so—so unlike what you are. I like all my" (she had nearly said "servants," but she checked herself in time), "employees to dress with due regard to their position and mine."

"In other words, you wish me to dress like an upper servant?"

"Not exactly like a servant, of course, but not to copy our dresses—my daughters and my own, I mean."

"You need have no fear on that score, madam," Dolores Williamson said, with such bitter scorn in her heart that some of it found its way on to her tongue. "I should never attempt to copy anything worn by either Miss Emmond or yourself. I cannot alter my style of dress. I have nothing in my wardrobe that smacks of the servants' hall. I will wear the plainest things I possess while in your service—that is what you call it, I think. As far as this afternoon went, if I had known that a white dress as a bazaar would be objected to I should not have worn it. The flowers and such I added, never dreaming they would be considered too fine. I was going to sing on a public platform. I naturally thought a little adornment admissible."

"Perhaps it was," Mrs. Emmond said, feeling somehow that she was not getting the best of it. "But you will understand another time."

"I shall understand that you object to anything that pleases the eye," the girl said. "You may be quite easy. I will never endeavour to outshine any of your family. And I will look better than any or all of them," she added, *sotto voce*, when the interview was ended, and she was once more alone. "If I went in sackcloth, with a rope round my waist, I should be more attractive than that painted doll of a daughter of hers. She will find that out by-and-by, and then—ah! well, till then I will rest content, and let the future take care of itself."

Mrs. Emmond felt, on the whole, as if she had not had the best of it in her interview with the new governess.

The opinion of the two children (and a child's opinion may generally be taken as of some worth) differed. The elder of her pupils declared that she liked her very much—was ready to love her, in fact—and the younger repeated the assertion she had made as they were returning from the bazaar, and likened her to the wolf in the nursery story.

"She did look it, mamma!" the little one praised. "She was not thinking about us at all, and she was saying something to herself, and she looked wicked—just like the wolf!"

Mrs. Emmond laughed, and told her little girl for her folly. She was too sensible to allow the child to talk in that way, but she remembered her words for all that, and resolved to wait and see how things went on.

She had asked her friend, who had found Miss Williamson for her, to select a governess with good credentials, and musical.

Maud disliked playing, unless it was to amuse

herself, and would have nothing to do with the children's music lessons.

Miss Williamson's credentials were unimpeachable. She had a testimonial from a clergyman of good repute, in whose family she had lived some time, and who testified to her good qualities.

Mrs. Emmond looked out the gentleman's name in the Clergy List and wrote to him. The answer came back by return of post.

He was very happy to recommend Miss Williamson; of whose services all round he could not speak too highly. He only hoped that her delicate health would not stand in her way.

There was no sign of ill-health about her now, and Mrs. Emmond questioned her about it.

She had been ill, she said, at Lutterby, the name of the Rev. Mr. Prouting's place, but he and his wife were both nervous folks, and always in a state of anxiety about the health of their daughter and everybody else with whom they came in contact. There had never been anything of consequence the matter with her.

"They took too much care of me, I think," she said, when Mrs. Emmond questioned her about it. "They were too good to me."

Maud Emmond refused to believe in Miss Williamson, or to like her in any way.

"Lutterby is a sleepy, old-world parish," she said. "And I cannot believe that a girl like that ever existed there for three years, mamma. Are you sure there is no mistake?"

"My dear child, here is Mr. Prouting's letter!" Mrs. Emmond said. "There is no mistake anywhere. I suppose they were musical, and liked her for that."

"I don't like her for anything," Maud replied, fretfully. "I wish we had never asked her if she could sing. I wish she had never come here, that I do."

"My dear child, she will not stand in your way."

"Yes, she will. She has already. Did you not see how everybody stared at her when she was on the platform in that ridiculous dress clinging round her like a dishcloth, and that outrageous saah! The men got about her like a swarm of bees; it was perfectly disgusting! Jocelyn Caraw stared at her like a perfect idiot, and did not seem to see that there was anyone else in the room afterwards. And Lady Underhill and Mr. Dalrymple, too, paying her all sorts of ridiculous compliments, as if no one had ever sung a song before. She looks like an actress, and not like anyone from a respectable house."

"She shall not get to the front again like that, my dear! It was the accident of your sore throat. You will see Mr. Dalrymple again somewhere else; and as for Mr. Caraw, there will be no flirtations between the carate and my governess, you may rest assured of that."

"I am not so sure of that," Maud said to herself, after her mother had left her. "That girl will flirt with anyone and everyone that she meets."

Maud Emmond was a past mistress in the science of flitting, and she knew, perhaps, better than her mother what to expect from the beautiful governess.

She had taken Miss Williamson's measure more correctly than Mrs. Emmond had done, and so had her little sister—the one who professed so much admiration for her new teacher.

Katie Emmond was a sharp child, and a very few hours served to show her that she would have an indulgent preceptor as long as she minded her own business, and shut her eyes to what Miss Williamson did not choose that she should see, and that she would get off a great many disagreeable lessons by knowing nothing that she was not bidden to know, and flattering her governess on every possible opportunity.

She wondered a little where all the good qualities had gone to that Mr. Prouting had written so warmly about; but she was a shrewd girl, and it was no business of hers. So she held her tongue, and did not tell her mother that she knew a great deal more on some subjects than Miss Williamson did; and she scolded her sister for her dislike, in which the child never wavered, and wormed herself into the good graces of the governess, so that everything went smoothly enough.

Jocelyn Carew made more than one opportunity for a visit to the Edmonds' house, but he never managed to see Dolores Williamson. He could look at her in church, where she sat between her pupils with a still, grave face of such infinite beauty that he almost forgot his office, and let the knowledge of her presence come between him and the holy truths that he was there to teach.

She was always either out or engaged when he made an excuse for visiting the First, and she never seemed to walk anywhere she was likely to meet him.

He was not to know how every moment of her time was watched and ordered by Mrs. Edmond and the jealous Maud, the latter of whom schemed to be his frequent companion in his village labours, and was always foremost in any church decoration or parish gatherings, from which the governess—as being below the salt, as it were—was carefully excluded.

More than one person inquired after the girl with the wonderful voice, and the Vicar was curious to know why she did not join the choir. Mrs. Edmond answered for her that she was shy, and did not wish to put herself forward; that the singing at the bazaar had been almost an accident, which she did not wish to repeat; in short, she managed to give the worthy gentleman, who was not very far-seeing, an idea that Dolores Williamson was by no means an amiable girl and that the village was quite as well without her.

It was not true. No one could be more amiable than the dark-eyed governess when it suited her purpose to be so, and she was playing the rôle now to perfection.

She lived her life and bore the confinement and the coldness and the incessant sharp words that seemed to be her portion with angelic sweetness; but she wore her artistic-looking dresses, and looked as someone ecstatically said, like a medieval saint by the side of the common-place girl of the period "style of Maud Edmond."

Maud tried copying her clinging gowns and broad sashes for a time; but the result was supremely ridiculous. She looked more common-place and unrefined than ever, and gave up the attempt in disgust.

More than a month had passed since her arrival in Brierfield before Jocelyn Carew managed to get a word with her, except the few he had spoken at the never-to-be-forgotten bazaar, and by that time he had come to think of very little else.

It was a weird, uncanny fascination. The face and voice of the unknown girl seemed to fill his very life, and exclude all earthly things but the remembrance of her eyes and the sound of her singing.

People told him he was growing pale and thin; his landlady pestered him with advice, and bemoaned his altered condition to her gossips. He persisted that nothing ailed him. How could he tell the good woman that he was well-nigh bewitched with love for a girl of whom he knew nothing!—who might be the promised wife of some other man for aught he knew to the contrary!

He was walking through the village one afternoon when he met Edward Dairymple riding somewhat listlessly along. They stopped to chat, the young man greeting him, saying, in a surprised tone,—

"Why, Carew, whatever have you been doing to yourself?"

"Nothing," was the reply. "Why?"

"You look as if you had had, or were going to have, a bad illness. You are worn and haggard, like a man broken with want of sleep. You are working too hard."

"No; my work is not hard. People tell me I am not looking well. I suppose I am getting a little out of condition."

"That is a mild form for it, I should say. Why, what is it? You flush like a girl!" as the curate started violently, and his face flamed. "Oh, oh!" he said to himself, with a long low whistle, as an eminently graceful girl came suddenly round a corner, and went into a little shop that served as post-office to the village. "Isn't that the girl with the voice, that sang at that bazaar of yours?"

"That is Miss Williamson!"

"And you have been falling in love with her, and let 'concealment, like a worm in the bud,' do, or is it that the maiden is cold, and says you nay!"

"Don't chaff; there's a good fellow!"

Jocelyn Carew said. "I have never exchanged a word with Miss Williamson since you saw her yourself!"

CHAPTER III.

"HARD hit, I am afraid," Mr. Dairymple said. "Take care, Carew!"

"What do you mean?"

"I hardly know. I have a sort of feeling that there is danger connected with that girl. She is as much out of place in a country village playing governess to a pack of common-place children as an eagle would be sitting on hens' eggs in a farmyard. I have seen her before."

"Where?"

"Ah! that is what I have racked my brains unsuccessfully to find out. From the moment when I saw her standing there under the roses to sing to your banter folks I was sure I knew her face. It will come back to me sometime where it was."

"I don't think she has lived anywhere within your ken," the curate said, keeping his eyes fixed on the door of the post-office. "Her history is pretty well known here. She was governess in a quiet clergyman's family for three years before she came to Mrs. Edmond."

"That girl?"

"Miss Williamson!—yes!"

"Never! Look here, Carew! There's some jugglery in this thing. Don't entangle yourself with her, there's a good fellow. She is a woman with a history, depend on it."

"A history which is known!"

"No! Take my word for it, it is not. I tell you I have seen her somewhere. I shall know some time."

"And I tell you you have not, unless you have been at Latterby, in Northumberland, during the past three years. She hardly stirred from the Rectory there all that time. Mrs. Edmond has been most particular in her inquiries."

"And you seem particularly interested in them also?"

"I was curious, as everyone else was. Miss Williamson is too uncommon a person not to excite interest."

"Don't let her excite too much in you," Edward Dairymple said, more gravely than it was his wont to speak. "Mischiefs will come of it if you do. Don't be rusty about it, old fellow! I am sure of what I say. I have seen the girl somewhere, and it wasn't in any country parsonage."

Jocelyn Carew was "rusty," as his friend called it, and let him see that he thought his interference unwarrantable; and they parted with just a shade of coldness on both sides.

The cause of the discussion, meanwhile, watched them both from the window of the post-office, wondering not a little what they were talking about.

"At last," she said to herself, "I shall have the pleasure of meeting Mr. Jocelyn Carew. It has only been a meeting of eyes hitherto; but eyes can speak, and the curate's have not been silent. Jocelyn Carew—not a bad name, nor a bad family! I wonder what he would say if he knew all that I do!"

She crushed a letter she held in her hand as she spoke—a letter in a masculine handwriting that she had opened and read, standing at the counter of the little shop.

The expression of her face changed with wonderful rapidity as the young clergyman drew near. It had been hard and defiant; before he reached her it was all softness, with a tinge of sadness in it, and the great, dark eyes seemed filled with tears.

"Good morning, Mr. Carew!" she said gently, and almost shyly, and made as if she would have passed him without another word, but he stopped and held out his hand.

"At last I have the pleasure of meeting you,

Miss Williamson!" he said, and his voice was husky and thick with the rapid beating of his heart. "I was beginning to despair of ever seeing you except at church!"

"Have you ever tried?" she asked.

"Tried! I have called at Mrs. Edmond's countless times. I am in the habit of calling there frequently on parish business, you know—and I have always asked for you, to be told that you were engaged. Mrs. Edmond—"

"Is somewhat strict with her servants, Mr. Carew. She does not allow company—followers. Is not that the word?"

"But you are not a servant!"

"I am the governess. It is all the same to her. She pays me wages, and I am bound to obey her. That I am out to-day without my pupils is due to the fact that she herself is unwell, and had some rather particular letters to post, and a communion or two to be executed in the village which it was not expedient to speak of before my interesting pupils, who proclaim everything they hear as industriously as town-criers; but I dare say you are acquainted with the young ladies!"

"Quite as much as I wish to be," the curate said, laughing. And then the two walked away together towards the First—nearly a mile distance—he entering an alchym of his own creating, manufactured out of the glances of her lustrous dark eyes—she with certain words in the letter she had just read burning themselves into her memory, and making her smile at every tremulous word and eager look that the stricken curate turned in her direction.

The ice was broken, and in less than a week Mrs. Edmond was reprimanding her governess for what she called her scandalous conduct in allowing the curate to make "clandestine assignations with her." They had met again and again, and Jocelyn Carew was in the seventh heaven of ecstatic delight.

"I have made no assignations as you call it with anyone, madam," the girl replied, quietly. "I have as much right to speak to Mr. Jocelyn if he chooses to honour me with his notices as your daughter has."

"My daughter!" exclaimed the irate lady. "How dare you compare yourself with her?"

"It was very presumptuous on my part, certainly," was the unflinching answer. "Mrs. Edmond should never be put in comparison with a mere governess; but I repeat my words, madam. I have as much right to speak to the Rev. Jocelyn Carew as anyone in the village, and shall continue to do so without asking anyone's permission."

"Miss Williamson, you are insolent."

"Not willingly, madam. Your own words forced mine from me. I am not a child or a servant to be ordered what I shall do or not do in such a tyrannical manner."

"It will not suit me to keep you if you indulge in such sentiments here. Everyone at the First is to obey and be guided by me. I repeat I will have no more such goings on as these with Mr. Carew, who ought to be ashamed of himself."

"I am not aware that I have done anything to be ashamed of," Dolores Williamson said, in the quiet tone that was so exasperating to the vulgarly passionate woman as she was talking to. "Nor has Mr. Carew, that I am aware of. You will be good enough to speak of him civilly—at least when you mention him to me."

"And why to you, pray! What is he to you?"

"My future husband!" replied the girl, with a smile.

"It is false," almost screamed Mrs. Edmond, forgetting all her dignity in her rage at the announcement. "How dare you to utter such a wicked falsehood!"

"It is no falsehood, madam. He intends to tell you himself—to-morrow, I believe. I should not have spoken about it but for your false and unadvisable insinuations."

"I refuse to believe such an improbable story, Miss Williamson," the irate lady persisted. "Either you have been strangely mistaken, or you have invented the tale altogether. Mr. Carew is far too cautious a young man to

engage himself to a person whose antecedents—

"You professed to be quite satisfied with my antecedents when you engaged me as governess to your daughter," Dolores said, drawing herself up. "They are at least as worthy of respect as yours or your husband's," she added, a little spitefully, and Mrs. Emmond fairly foamed with rage, and could not speak to answer her for a moment.

Mr. Emmond, for all his greatness in Briarfield, had begun life in a carpenter's shop in a North of England town, and his wife, the fashionable lady of Briarfield, had been a milliner's apprentice in the same place.

It was all in the far past. Lucky speculations and shrewd business qualities had raised the pair to their present position, and they did their best to forget that they had ever been anything different from the well-to-do folks that all their neighbours knew them.

Dolores Williamson had hit the blot when she spoke of the past, and Mrs. Emmond literally gasped before she could reply to her.

"How dare you!" she hissed, "you audacious—; but I will have no more of such insolence in my house. You will prepare to leave at once, madam; and if Mr. Carew chooses to marry a person who has been dislamed for insolence and ingratitude—a person of whom nothing is known—"

"Except what you professed to be perfectly satisfied with yourself. Please to remember that!" the girl said, quietly, her extreme coolness only adding to Mrs. Emmond's rage. "As I said, I am Mr. Carew's affianced wife; it might be as well to allow me to leave your house in a quiet manner for your own sake. The fact of your turning me out directly you were acquainted with the fact that your daughter had failed to win him for herself might set people remarking on your proceedings."

"Mr. Carew is in the dining-room, ma'am, if you please," said a servant appearing at the door at this moment, and Dolores laughed—a little amused laugh, that nearly sent Mrs. Emmond into a fit of hysterics.

"I need say no more on the subject. I will leave you to speak to Mr. Carew yourself," Miss Williamson said. "He will corroborate what I have told you, if it is necessary that he should do so. I am to understand, of course, that I leave your service as soon as I can make my arrangements to do so?"

"The sooner the better—the sooner the better," Mrs. Emmond replied. "I don't understand it at all. I shall get Mr. Emmond to speak to the vicar. Mr. Carew must be mad."

"I don't think he is, and I don't quite see what the vicar can do in the matter. Mr. Carew is his own master, and no one has any right to dictate to him."

"He is not his own master in this parish—and we shall see."

"We shall," Miss Williamson retorted, smiling; "and the wretched lady leaving the room was met in the passage by her husband, who had overheard a few of her last words, and who rather roughly bade her mind her own business, and not be a fool. Carew had told him what he was going to do, and it was no one's affair but his own. If he chose to marry a pretty girl, and live on love, what was it to them?"

Mr. Emmond had always admired Miss Williamson more than his wife approved of, and this open championship was what came of it. She was obliged to excuse herself to Mr. Carew, or allow her husband to do it for her—for the impending hysterics became a fact as what she called his heartlessness, and her maid and her daughter had to be summoned to take her to her room.

Meantime Jocelyn Carew conferred with Mr. Emmond, and had an interview with his indolence in that gentleman's presence. They should be very poor for a while, he said, but they meant to face the world with a will, and be happy in their own way. There was certainly a living to be got somehow. Teaching, that would supplement his small income, and he had expectations—only small ones; but still something—from a relative abroad. They should do very well.

Mr. Emmond remembered his own young days, and sympathised with them, wondering a little at the odd expression that came into the girl's face when her lover spoke of their poverty. It gave him the notion, somehow, that she had money, and was keeping it a secret.

"So it is public property now, my darling!" the curate said, as he bade his betrothed good-night, pressing her in his arms and kissing her upturned face as if he could never be satisfied. "All the village will know it to-morrow. Mr. Emmond can never keep anything to himself."

"It does not matter," she said, looking up at him with eyes full of love. "It must be known some time."

And then she went up to her own room and shut herself in, and took out a letter from her writing-desk, and looked at the date.

"Have I made a fool of myself, after all?" she said. "Will the news never come?"

The next morning saw Jocelyn Carew at Mrs. Emmond's door at the earliest moment he could possibly venture to call. His face was very white, and he looked almost like a man walking in his sleep.

"Is anything the matter, sir?" asked the girl who opened the door to him, alarmed at his pale face.

"Nothing, thank you. Can I see Miss Williamson immediately; that is, if Mrs. Emmond will allow it? I have something important to say to her."

"Misses isn't up, sir. I will call Miss Williamson," was the reply; and in a very few moments Dolores was standing beside him, looking inquiringly into his face.

"Dear, what is it?" she asked, her own voice trembling, and her cheeks flushing. There was a sparkle in her eyes that he would have wondered at if he had not been too preoccupied with his wonderful news to notice anything.

"Can you bear a surprise, darling—a great and joyful one?" he asked, and she hid her face on his breast as she murmured her answer, lest he might read the expression in her face too readily.

"We shall not be poor, Dolores. There will be no hard work, no privation in the future, darling! I am almost mad with joy when I think of it."

"What do you mean?" she asked flatteringly. "Has anyone presented you with a living?"

"Better than that, dearest, a fortune. Read—read this. It has only just come, but it is true. It is from my uncle's men of business—mine too."

She took an open letter from his hand and read it, while her own trembled so that the words seemed to dance before her eyes. It set forth that Mr. Jocelyn Carew of Batavia had died, and left his sole fortune to his nephew, Jocelyn Arthur Carew, who was requested to proceed at once to London to see them about it. At a rough guess about sixty thousand pounds was the sum it would be worth, besides moneys in various securities and in different banks.

A fortnight later, Edward Dalrymple, sitting outside the Hotel Victoria at Eingen, had a letter put into his hands as he loitered over his breakfast.

"From Carew, I declare!" he said to his companion, another friend of college days, who had also known the curate slightly. "What has he got to say, I wonder! By Jove!"

"What's up?" asked his friend.

"Listen," the other replied, as he turned the letter over. "Two wonderful things have happened to me since I saw you. I have won a wife, and come into a fortune. Of the latter more anon, of the former I cannot speak much. My happiness is too great. You know her. You have seen her, and heard her voice, and—"

"And I know where I saw her before," Edward Dalrymple said, starting up, while his friend looked at him in amazement. "He must not marry her; he shall not if I can get to England in time to stop it!"

CHAPTER IV.

EDWARD DALRYMPLE let no time pass before he set out for England, leaving his friend at Eingen. His motive, whatever it was, was a strong one, for he told his companion he would stop the marriage at the risk of losing the friendship of Jocelyn Carew for ever.

"I shall be sorry to do that," he said, "for he is a good fellow, but I cannot see him throw himself away on a—I need not say what she is, but she is no wife for him."

"You are sure you know her, Dalrymple?"

"As sure as I know that I am standing here talking to you," Edward Dalrymple replied. "Good-bye, old fellow. I will meet you again at Brussels."

He stayed nowhere on his way home, made straight for the hotel he generally used when in London, and met Jocelyn Carew emerging from the entrance of it with a lady on his arm. He started back with an exclamation of disappointment. Something in the look of triumph in the dark, handsome face of the girl told him that his errand was fruitless.

"Too late!" he gasped out, as Jocelyn Carew came forward with a delighted face to greet him.

"Too late for what?" he said. "Dalrymple, is it really you? How glad I am to see you. You are not too late to congratulate me. This is my wife, Mrs. Carew," and there was a world of love and tenderness in his tone as he uttered the words. "You have seen her once before, I know, though I daresay you do not remember it."

"Yes, I have seen the lady, and I remember her well," the young man replied. "I only meant that I was too late to wish you all happiness on your wedding-day."

"No one was able to do that; we stole a march on everyone. Dolores—that is, we—did not want any fuss over the thing. There has been gossip enough over my affairs in Briarfield to last a lifetime. Are you going to stay here? Shall we see you again?"

"I always put up here. I shall be glad to make Mrs. Carew's acquaintance."

He went into the hotel, and the curate looked after him with something of concern on his face.

"Something is the matter," he said. "I never saw Dalrymple look so troubled before."

"Been losing money, perhaps?" his bride said.

"He did not seem particularly inclined to be civil to me."

"He is the best fellow going when you know him, dear! I know you will like him."

"I daresay I shall if you do," Dolores said, indifferently. "Never mind him now, dear! We are losing our day; we shall see him by-and-by."

Jocelyn Carew was in a fool's paradise. "Earth seemed Heaven" to him just now. He had won his bride and come into possession of his money, and life was just a delightful dream.

He was generally a sensible, earnest young fellow, ardent in doing good, and self-sacrificing to a degree, but his happiness had well-nigh turned his brain. It was a new thing to have money to spend as he pleased, and to be able to go hither and thither as his darling chose.

Already he had planned a home for her. He had an estate in view, which was to be their future residence, but Dolores pleaded for delay.

"Let us go abroad a little while first," she said.

"I have had such dull times of it lately that my capacity for enjoyment is amazing. We can settle down into hundred country people when we have looked about a little."

He consented, as he would have done to anything she proposed. She was by no means exacting or extravagant as yet. He did not dream that she meant to stay away from England when once she had crossed the Channel, and that she objected with all her might to anything like settling down in England.

She did not tell him. It would do by-and-by, when she had thoroughly measured his capacity for opposing her wishes. She had only to look at him now, to turn those great dark eyes of hers on his face, and he would have sold his soul, if

such a trading were possible, to gratify any whim of hers.

She had told him all her past as far back as she could remember it. Here had been a struggling life from her earliest childhood, she said. Her father had been a clerk in a Government office, and had lost his situation through an affliction which laid him on a bed of sickness for years, and when at last he died, leaving her and her mother penniless, the health of the latter was so broken that it soon gave way, and she followed him to the silent land, leaving her child alone to the mercy of the world.

Then a rich relation came forward and paid for a certain amount of education for the friendless girl, and a situation was found for her; and her expenses paid thither, on condition that her cousin saw no more of her, and she had supported herself ever since.

This was the true history of Dolores Williamson, as could be testified by plenty of people; and Jocelyn Carew kissed her when she related it to him, and told her he was proud of her independent spirit, and loved her all the better for the struggles she had made.

She looked superbly lovely as she sat alone for a few minutes after her dinner was over, the soft light of the lamps falling on her rich dress and shining hair. The days were drawing in a little—for it was autumn when the news came of the fortune that had come to Jocelyn Carew—and a bright fire burned in the grate.

Dolores wore a dress that would have been startling and somewhat out of any one else, but which suited her dark beauty, and made her look almost regal in her loveliness. It was heavy for a bride, but she was not choosing her costumes with any reference to her recent marriage. She just wore what made her look best; and this dress—all crimson velvet and satin—artistically bloused, gloved about her, and lit up her loveliness in a weird fashion that was startling and curious in its effect. She wore very little ornament—she needed none. One or two rings of price glittered on her fingers, and a costly brooch fastened the lace at her throat. Diamond solitaires matching the brooch glistened in her shapely ears, but her magnificent hair was unadorned, and wound about her in a statuesque coil, very different from the studied carelessness of its arrangement at the Brierfield bazaar. She was looking into the fire half dreamily, wondering how long her husband would be—he had gone downstairs to see the landlord on business—when a tap came to the door.

"Come in," she said, thinking to see no one more important than a waiter with some question or other; but Edward Dairymple stood in the doorway.

She started to her feet with something very like fear in her face, which turned deadly white as she confronted him.

"I hope I did not startle you, Mrs. Carew!" he said.

"I think you did. I was in a brown study. Will you not sit down? My husband will be up directly."

"Thank you, I only came for a word with you. You know me, Mrs.—, but I see you do."

"I knew you that day at Brierfield," she replied, and her voice sounded harsh and broken as she answered him. "I hoped you did not know me. What do you want with me? I am Mr. Carew's wife, and he is satisfied. What have you or any man to do with it?"

"He is satisfied because he knows of nothing to make him otherwise—because he thinks he has taken an innocent girl to his heart, who has led a blameless life of industry and purity. Do you think he would be satisfied if he knew that—"

"How do you know that he does not know—that I have not told him? Why do you come here to torment me with questions? Can you not let the past die? I can, and bury it—stamp it down with relentless feet till no whisper of it can ever rise to confront me!"

"The past is not so easily killed," Edward Dairymple said, quietly. "You had no right to let an honest, true man give his heart into your keeping without telling him what that past had been. Do you think a man like Jocelyn Carew

would have taken you knowing your antecedents? He would have died rather than pollute himself with—"

"He has taken me, and all your fine words will not undo that fact," Mrs. Carew said, with an evil light in her eyes. "I think I understand now what you meant when you said, 'too late' this morning. You would have stopped our marriage if you could!"

"I would, at the risk of losing his friendship for ever. I would have shown him the true character of the woman he idolised."

"And made him hate you for ever!" she retorted, with a smile. "He swore to me only this morning that nothing—nothing, mind you—that he could ever hear or know about me could change him, or make his love one atom less."

"Not if all your past were laid bare before him—not if Lord Pysmere told his story and the manager of the L'Etoile in Paris narrated his experience of you! You see I am acquainted with a good many events in your life."

"I am not afraid of Lord Pysmere, nor of my old friend of the L'Etoile," she said, with a slight quiver of her lip. "They could make my husband uncomfortable, of course, but they cannot undo the fact that he is my husband. In it worth your while to stir up the mud? Were you so good in those days that you want to bring back again that you can throw dirt at me? I am not afraid of that part of the past you make so much of."

"She has something she is afraid of—a history farther back than anything I know of," Edward Dairymple said to himself, as he watched her face and saw it change. "What is it, I wonder!"

He looked at her for a moment with a puzzled feeling; in spite of bravado a troubled look had come into her eyes.

"You will not betray me," she said. "You will not spoil his happiness. He believes me to be a good woman. Let him think it for a little while. I am going to be an honest, true wife to him, so help me Heaven, if I am let alone."

"You will be for me," the young man said, gravely and sadly; "but it will come out some day. Those things always do. If you are wise you will tell Carew everything—keep nothing back; the sorrow of it will be easier to bear now than in after years. Do not keep anything from him; tell him all—all your life from a child; there may be much in it to excuse what I know of it."

"All!" she said, with a shiver, while a ghastly paleness overspread her face. "Ah, heavens, no! Don't torture me—don't talk to me any more, or I shall go mad."

She threw herself down on the cushions of the couch and burst into passionate tears, and he watched her wonderingly.

"It is not the Pysmere affair," he said to himself. "It is farther back than that. Poor Carew—poor fellow! There is a black future before him if I am not mistaken. How did she come where he first saw her? What jugglery turned Darine Vane into Dolores Williamson? Ah, well! 'tis best, perhaps, to let sleeping dogs lie; their awakening is apt to be rough on someone. I only hope that Pysmere is done with, for her husband's sake."

He bent over her and said a few reassuring words. He was sorry for her; he had seen something of the reckless past, when a young actress and singer had turned the heads of some of the idle frequenters of the theatre where she was engaged.

She had disappeared as suddenly as she had arisen, and he had next seen her installed in a cottage on the river, of which Lord Pysmere was the owner pro tem.

What she had been before she reigned there, the reckless hostess of gay parties as reckless as herself, or what had become of her since Lord Pysmere had married and settled down, he did not know. She had vanished, and all the world knew about it was that there had been a fierce quarrel, a refusal of all settlements, and a disappearance, the general opinion being that Darine Vane had turned Catholic and entered a convent.

"You need not fear me," he said, gently. "You are right, perhaps. I am thinking of my friend, and what he will feel when the truth comes out, as it will."

"No, it will not; we are going away—to travel—out of reach of everyone. He will never know, and he loves me. He will not believe idle stories."

"Heaven forbid that he should hear all that can be told," Edward Dairymple said, and again the sick change passed over the dark, beautiful face. "Take my advice and tell him yourself. He may be shocked, but he is a good man; and he will forgive."

"Not that," she said, shaking her head. "You do not know him if you think that. Leave me now; he is coming back; I hear his footstep."

"Nay, I will stay and speak to him. Have no fear. I will reveal nothing; indeed you may trust me, until—"

"Until when?"

"Until you deceive him in any fresh way."

"Then you may trust me till death," she said, quietly. "I shall never wish to do that." She had regained her composure by the time her husband entered the room, though there was a suspicious redness about her eyes that he remarked upon when they were once more alone together.

"Yes, I was crying for a minute," she said, in answer to his loving questions. "There is nothing the matter. I think I am too happy, that is all. I got over-excited, and then tears are a relief. Think of what I was and what you have made me! Is there any wonder that I cry for very joy sometimes?"

Less than a week after this Jocelyn Carew and his bride were touring through the lovely Rhineland, all aglow with ripening vineyards and the thousand varying tints of a bright autumn.

The young clergyman was more in love than ever, and no shadow had arisen to mar their happiness.

Dolores was gay and seemingly happy, and lovelier than a poet's dream; and the fame of her beauty went abroad, till tourists hustled each other to get a sight of her, and hotel servants schemed to wait upon her, as if she were a queen.

One day at Bonn a curious thing happened. They were sitting together in the balcony of their room watching a procession of priests and children going somewhere with flags and a saintly shrine, all in their best array.

Dolores was making a casual remark, when all of a sudden her face turned grey, like the face of a corpse, and with a gasp she fell from her chair in a swoon.

Terrified beyond measure, Jocelyn Carew rang for help, and she was laid on a couch, and restoratives applied; but it was long before she came to herself, and when she did was half-delirious and incoherent, gasping out in terror that she must hide, and asking, in frightened tones,—

"Where is he! Is he gone?"

When she came fully to herself she laughed at their inquiries as to who she was asking about. She was asking for no one. She could not tell what ailed her. She had been looking at the procession, and all at once she felt giddy—that was all she knew.

They were leaving Bonn that evening, and the next saw them at Bingen, at the same hotel where Edward Dairymple had stayed. There a card was brought to them, "Mr. John Martin," and again Mrs. Carew's face turned ashy grey. She did not faint this time; only said,—

"Don't see him, Jocelyn; he—"

The sentence was not finished, for the owner of the card was in the room before she could conclude it—a common-looking man, well enough dressed, but not a gentleman.

There was a strange, half-insolent look on his face, and Jocelyn did not stand on ceremony with him.

"I think there is some mistake," he said.

"I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance."

"No, you don't know me; but this lady does," the man replied. "So I have found you at last, my lady, have I!"

"How dare you! What do you mean!" Mr. Carew began; but somehow the words stuck in his throat, and a horrible dread almost stopped the beating of his heart.

"She knows," the man said. "Look at her," for Dolores had shrunk crouching in a corner with terror-stricken eyes.

"What do you mean!" Jocelyn Carew repeated. "What is this lady to you?"

"My wife," was the quiet retort. "I'll trouble you to come along with me, Mrs. Martin, if you please."

CHAPTER V.

JOCYLYN CAREW stared at the speaker in bewilderment, doubting the evidence of his senses. It seemed to him as if he must surely be dreaming.

Who was this man—a common person, evidently, though he was well dressed, and spoke with calmness and propriety—that dared to invade his rooms, and claim his wife—his beautiful Dolores—for his wife!

One look towards the sofa, where his wife was sitting when the announcement of the man's presence was made, and his heart sank, and seemed as if it would stop beating at the sight of her.

Crouching down in a corner, with a white, wild fear, she was staring at the intruder with hunted eyes, which told all too plainly that there was truth in what he said.

He could hardly believe that it was his lovely, innocent wife, who was transformed by some horrible agony of fear into that awful, terror-haunted woman.

"I—I don't understand!" he gasped, huskily. "You say this lady is—"

"My wife," the man replied, quietly. "She dare not look me in the face and deny it."

She could not; she only hid her face as he pointed at her, and shuddered.

"Will you hear what I have to say, sir?" John Martin said. "I will be as short in the telling as I can. I can guess what it must be to you—I know what it was to me to find her false."

"Go on," the curate said, huskily, his voice sounding in his own ears as though it belonged to some one else. "Say what there is to be said, and let me know the worst."

The miserable woman in the corner of the room raised her head, and spoke hoarsely.

"It is a lie, Jocelyn, a wicked lie! Will you let this man, whom you have never seen before, come between us, and poison your life!"

"It is the truth, sir," the unwelcome guest said, quietly. "I am not such a villain as to try and come between man and wife, as she would make out. She is my wife—lawfully married to me at Boldover Church in Warwickshire, seven years ago. There are plenty of people there will know her when I take her back again."

"Go on," Jocelyn Carew said again. "Let me hear it all, and then—ah, Heaven! what then!"

He covered his face for a moment, and then motioned to John Martin to continue.

"It's an old story, sir," he said, "the story of the prettiest girl in all the country round, and the silly fool who believed he had been lucky enough to win her."

"I won her, sir—at least I thought I did. She told me she loved me, with the light in her eyes and the flush on her cheek that men fancy—Heaven help them!—love calls up."

"She wasn't Dolores Williamson then, I can tell you how she came by that name. I have traced all her life since she left me, and if I could have come up with her before she spoiled yours I would have prevented that part of it, you may be sure."

"She was just Annie Withers when we played together as children, and Annie Withers when she swore at the altar to be faithful to me and no other till her dying day."

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"She was just Annie Withers when we played together as children, and Annie Withers when she swore at the altar to be faithful to me and no other till her dying day."

"It was the old story, sir—a pretty woman in a humble home, and a rich gentleman with lying lips and a fair, false face. He had plenty of time to ride to our cottage door, and talk now and then with the wife, who was sometimes alone."

"He found what he wanted, curse him!—a woman who cared more for fine clothes, and jewels, and the life of excitement and pleasure he promised her than for an honest man's love. She left me, and I swore to kill the man who had dishonoured me and ruined her."

"And you did!"

Jocelyn Carew hissed out the words, feeling as if nothing but blood could wipe out such a wrong.

"No; he nearly killed me. I struck him in the face like the coward that he was as he got out of his carriage one night at the door of a London theatre, with my wife on his arm. He was a strong man and a trained athlete. I was weak from grief, and worn with searching for the woman I had lost. He turned upon me and knocked me down, and beat me before I could get up again, till I knew no more, and found myself in a hospital the next day, feeling as if every bone in my body was broken. His lordship—did I tell you he was a lord!—swore that he did it all in self-defence; there was no one to speak for me—a stranger. He would not press the charge, he said he was going abroad; and there was no one to tell the tale of my wrongs or to hint that the woman all glistening with jewels and shining in fine clothes was the wife of the bruised wretch who had struck her paralytic."

I had my revenge. She served him as she had served me, and in a very little while she had made herself and her doings the talk of all London, and Paris too. She had a voice like an angel. You have heard her sing maybe!"

"Ah! don't," said the unhappy husband, with a shiver. "Go on; finish what you have to say."

"I suppose someone paid for her to be brought out; managers of theatres don't do such things for nothing nowadays. When I saw her again she was Darine Vane, the singer, the most notorious and reckless of all."

"No more, no more," groaned Jocelyn Carew. "I cannot bear it, I cannot."

"There's not much more to tell, sir. You have heard of Darine Vane, I can see, the singer and actress, who disappeared just after a scandal that would have sent her into the deepest oblivion if she had dared to face her world again after it. There is some little sense of honour left even amongst people like that. It was said she had gone into a convent; I knew better. I knew when I heard it that no convent walls would ever hold her, and I was right. I saw her by accident, one day, in the City go into the office of some respectable lawyers, and the clerk told me she was Miss Dolores Williamson, there by appointment, something about testimonials and a character. I almost laughed when I heard it. I knew she had stolen the name, perhaps murdered the person it belonged to, and I waited for her to come out; but there was another entrance, and she had gone out by it."

"I lost her after that, and the next thing I heard of her was an announcement that Miss Dolores Williamson had married Mr. Jocelyn Carew, curate or former curate of Briarsfield. The story set forth that you had come into a fortune, and it spoke of the lady's dark beauty and her wonderful voice. It was the merest chance that I picked up the paper. I was waiting at a roadside inn, and it lay upon the table. I had almost made up my mind to seek my runaway wife no more, but I determined that she should deceive no more men as long as I lived. I have been to America on business, and only just returned to England. I tracked you out, and here I am. That is all."

All! It was enough. To Jocelyn Carew the world seemed to be crashing into fragments around him. He stared at John Martin and the woman he had believed to be his wife in wild horror, and when at length he found voice to speak it was strained and harsh.

"Is it true!" he gasped. "For Heaven's sake tell me the truth! Am I mad, or are you,

Dolores, or is this man raving! Speak someone, or I shall go mad!"

His face was working fearfully, and his cheeks were purple.

She raised her head and looked at him with haggard eyes.

"It is true," she said; "but as Heaven hears me, Jocelyn Carew, I believed that man was dead. I would have been a good and true wife to you, and—"

The sentence was never finished, Jocelyn Carew flung out his arm as though he would have grasped her by the shoulder, groaned, and fell forward on his face just as the door was burst violently open, and Edward Dairymple appeared on the threshold.

"Too late," he said, sadly, as he raised his stricken friend. "I hoped to have been here to help soften this blow to him. You have killed him between you."

"I have told nothing but the truth," the man said, looking remorsefully at the insensible form, which Edward Dairymple had lifted to a couch. "If mischief comes of it is to her doing, not mine. I only came here for my wife, and she will go back with me. She will not need any of the gentleman's money. I have enough and to spare for all her wants."

There was something in the look of his eyes that made the young man shudder as he looked at him.

"Heaven help her if she is going with him," he thought to himself, but he made no remark, only rang the bell.

"A doctor at once, the nearest," he said, to the waiter who answered the summons. "My friend is ill. Then, as the man disappeared, all wonder and curiosity, he turned to Dolores, who stood as if turned into stone. "May I suggest that you leave these rooms!" he said. "It will be better that he should see no one but me when he rouses, if he ever does."

"You are hard," she said, in an icy voice, as if the words froze on her lips; "hard as Heaven will some day be to you, perhaps; but you are right. I will go."

She turned away, and would have left the room alone, but John Martin seized her by the arm.

"Not without your husband, madam," he said. "I have found my loving and faithful wife and I do not mean to let her go again."

"What are you going to do with me?" she asked, still in the same stony voice.

"Take you home," he replied. "Home, do you hear! It is not quite as fine a place as this, maybe, but it serves me, and it will do for my wife."

They passed out of the room together, and the door closed behind them, and Edward Dairymple turned to his stricken friend.

"Poor fellow!" he said, "what an awakening for him—what a shattering of his fool's paradise! Better now than later, when she had ruined him as she has ruined others—and it would have been ruin. A woman like that can no more go in a straight groove than an elephant can fly. Poor Carew! And she knew of the fortune before he did, that is certain, or she would never have married him. It is odd how things come out. It was surely something more than accident that Pytmer's man should come into the master's service and told his shameful story to my groom—how he helped his master to decoy away a woman all too willing to be won, and to break up an honest home. Carew her! I cursed her once before when she was Darine Vane and poor young Hartfield owed his ruin to her. What will be the ending, I wonder!"

The entrance of the doctor put an end to his musings, and he had plenty on his hands before many hours were over.

Jocelyn Carew was long in recovering his senses at all, and when he did it was only partially, and the doctor ordered his immediate removal to another place, where he would see nothing to remind him of anything unpleasant.

So when he really came back to life and a knowledge of what had befallen him, he was in another hotel, with everything about him fresh, and only his friend watching beside him.

The other landlord had been simply paid for

his trouble and the disappointment of losing his profitable guest. Family matters made it necessary for him to be moved, Mr. Dalrymple said. What had become of the beautiful wife was not quite clear. No one knew the business of the man who had sent up his card to the gentleman. There had been no altercation or anything of that sort. The lady had walked quietly out of the hotel as the doctor had entered it, and disappeared—spirited away, evidently, by the strange man.

Mr. Dalrymple volunteered no information, and there was no one else to give any.

"Dalrymple, is that you?"

Jocelyn Carew lifted his heavy head, and stared feebly at the figure by his side.

"Yes, my boy, myself and none other."

"How did you come here?"

"By boat and rail as fast as I could. I heard something accidentally which—yes old fellow, it is true," he said, shortly, as he saw the look of eagerness that came into his friend's face. "You remember, don't you, what happened? I was too late to prevent that fellow forcing himself on you, but—"

"Where is she?"

"Gone with her husband. Ah! don't turn away from me like that. It must be said. He is her husband, and nothing that you can say or suffer can undo the fact."

"But she thought him dead—she said so; she is innocent of intentional wrong."

"She didn't think so," Edward Dalrymple said gently. "Do not imagine that, Carew. I knew there was something in her past she was afraid of—something before any part with which I was connected in any way. She was a married woman, and she knew her husband lived. I saw the fear in her eyes when I implored her to tell me everything. She said she would in her own good time, but I knew there was something she could not tell. Oh! if I had only been in time to stop your marriage! I would have done it if I had forfeited your friendship for ever."

"Don't let us talk of it," Carew said, very quietly, but with a curious determination about his lips. "I will take means to find out the exact truth, though I think I heard it from that man's lips, and then we will speak of the subject no more. I loved her, and I believed her to be my wife, and her name shall be sacred for me."

"And for me," Dalrymple said, pressing his friend's hand. "It is a sore wound, Carew, but time will heal it."

"Never!" the other replied, and then he turned his face away, and said no more on the subject.

By-and-by he recovered, and crept about in the autumn sunshine, the ghost of his former self; and Edward Dalrymple's mother came to him and talked to his afflicted friend, and comforted and cheered him as only a gentle, large-hearted woman can cheer a stricken man; and presently Jocelyn Carew went back to England rich and lonely, and gave orders that the estate he had purchased should be sold again, and all the preparations that had been made for his bride's reception set aside.

Gossip had a hundred ways of accounting for this curious freak. B. Farfield gossiped till everybody in the village had aired a theory of his or her own.

No one knew what had become of Mrs. Carew, or why her husband had come home alone. It was reported she had run away from him; but it was difficult to believe how any wife, with no means of her own—and Miss Dolores Williamson had certainly had none—could run away from a husband who could give her everything that the heart of a woman could wish for.

Mr. Carew made no sign, and told no one. His wife's name never passed his lips when business took him to the village after his return to England.

She was well, that was all he would say about her; and when Mrs. Esmond, goaded by a curiosity she could not suppress, asked him point-blank whether there was anything wrong between them—for there were all sorts of reports about—she was met by the puzzling answer that they had never had so much as a dispute, and he found it difficult to believe that a husband and wife

could quarrel. He had had no experience of such a catastrophe.

CHAPTER VI.

MONTHS passed by, and the gossip died a natural death; and the beautiful Dolores Williamson, whose appearance had stirred up the depths of the B. Farfield stagnation for a little while, was well-nigh forgotten in the neighbourhood.

As Edward Dalrymple had told his friend, the story of her marriage and elopement subsequently with Lord Pytmore, had been told to one of his mother's servants by a new man she had recently engaged—the very groom who had been in his master's confidence through the whole nefarious transaction.

He heard nothing more. John Martin and his guilty wife might have vanished into the air or sunk into the earth for anything he heard of them again, till accident brought him once more face to face with the fair and faithless woman who had wrecked his friend's life.

The story of how she came by the name of Dolores Williamson had come out—also by an accident—and had found its way in a garbled and fragmentary fashion into some of the newspapers.

Those who had known Mrs. Esmond's handsome governess understood it, but to the general public and miscellaneous readers of the papers it was just a passing bit of news—a story of deception and falsehood, which had hitherto gone unpublished.

The real Dolores had been a friendless orphan, stopped on a journey from the North of England to London by a sudden and fatal illness, and John Martin's wife, known then as Darine Vane, hiding herself from the consequences of her latest wickedness—the ruin of a young Englishman in Paris—and well-nigh at her wit's end for the means of beginning life again in any fashion, no matter what, saw in the neglected girl's fatal illness—in the same poor hotel that sheltered herself—a chance of getting into some sort of position again.

The stranger's name was not known. She had been lifted half-fainting out of the omnibus at the door, and the beautiful woman who was waiting about for some means of continuing in the house seized the opportunity.

She boldly announced that she knew the young lady, or believed she did, and took upon herself to attend to her.

To steal the forlorn stranger's name and ransack her modest luggage was easy. A little money and a bank-book, with a small amount entered therein, rewarded her search, and sundry letters which served to show her exactly what to do if it appeared worth her while to appear in the world under another name.

The dying girl—for she was dying—had no relations, and the new friend who had turned up for her, and who saved the hotel people so much trouble by waiting on her, took care to confiscate any documents that might prove awkward if they were found.

There was nothing to tell what the forlorn stranger had been, where she came from, or where she was going to; when, at length, Miss Williamson said, sweetly, that she had been mistaken after all.—The poor girl was not the person she took her for.

She disappeared herself while the stranger lay dead, and appeared subsequently in London at the lawyers' offices with a letter from the Rev. Mr. Prouting in her pocket, in which they were earnestly requested to do all they could for Miss Williamson in the way of procuring her another situation. The air of their northern moors was too strong for her, and had undermined her health, which was never very strong.

Miss Williamson won the hearts of both members of the firm by her beauty and simplicity. She was very pale—waxen white, indeed—but seemed otherwise well.

She assured them that it was only the place that had not agreed with her. She was healthy, and should be glad to get into harness again as soon as possible. Mr. and Mrs. Prouting were

old people, and rather inclined to coddle everything within their reach. They had spoiled her, that was all.

The worthy lawyers had no reason to suspect that they were sending into a respectable household one of the most notorious women who had helped to drag an honest profession through the mire; and it was not for many months afterwards, when Dolores Williamson had gone her wicked way, and met with her deserts by being claimed by her forsaken lord, that they learned that they had been outwitted in the matter.

There were special circumstances which Mr. Prouting knew of well, and on coming to London he mentioned the young woman he had sent to them, and was astonished to hear them speak of her marvellous beauty.

"Beauty!" he exclaimed, to the head of the firm. "It is a matter of opinion, certainly, but I think she was about the plainest girl I ever saw. The face had a pleasing expression, but the light, prominent eyes and the odd colour of the hair, and the odd scar on the cheek gave her a certain grotesque appearance that was certainly not at all pretty. She was a good, amiable girl, and if her health had not failed so suddenly and so completely, we should never have parted with her."

The lawyer stared at his client in bewilderment.

"We are not speaking of the same person," he said. "The Miss Williamson who called upon us, sent by you, as she said, and showed by the letters she brought, is a lovely creature, so beautiful that I was astonished to see her seeking a governess's appointment. She looked like a duchess, and seemed a most accomplished and refined woman; indeed, she had her hair dressed every evening by the good-natured housemaid, and seemed to have belonged to a wealthy, but decayed family."

"There is something wrong," Mr. Prouting said, gravely. "Our poor Dolores was certainly accomplished in one way. She could sing beautifully; in other respects her attainments, though sufficient for our requirements, were nothing out of the common, and she was painfully shy."

"Then she has never been here," the lawyer said, quietly. "The lady we received was by no means shy. She was a perfectly self-possessed and wide-awake woman of the world, and rather seemed to take the upper hand than not. The girl who waited on her said she talked like an empress."

It was a mystery to be inquired into, and inquiry brought the facts to light after some time.

Poor Dolores Williamson was found to have been buried in the humblest manner under the name of Mary Warren, that name having appeared amongst the few things her supposed friend had left behind her.

The woman who had stolen her name, though she had done her no bodily harm, had gone her way, and been found out and taken away by her rightful owner. There her history seemed to end—no one knew quite what had become of John Martin.

The summer had come again, and Edward Dalrymple was far away from B. Farfield, exploring the nooks and corners of West Cornwall. He was with a party, but, for a day or two, he had separated himself from them, and stayed on shore while they had guns yachting, and amused himself by going about the different villages scattered here and there about the hills and moors.

In Carnmuth, nestling under a ridge of hills, from the summits of which the sea on both sides is visible, and which is yet sheltered enough from the storms of both channels to be a perfect bower of beauty when the summer is at its height, he loitered and rested, enjoying the perfect idleness which everyone likes now and then.

After a composite meal at the little inn, into which Cornish cream and fish, and eggs and bacon all entered, he strolled out and sat awhile on a hill-side under a great boulder, which the father of lies was said to have dropped out of his pocket while flying over the country on some errand of mischief.

Presently he heard the sound of horse's hoofs, and became conscious at the same time that someone was watching and waiting on the other side of the block of stone.

It was a woman, he could hear the rustle of her dress, and by cautiously rising and looking through a crevice he could see the approaching horseman. Something in the face was familiar to him, but for the moment he could not recall where he had seen it.

Suddenly recollection came back, and he stared at the solitary horseman in bewildered astonishment.

It was a rather hard, coarse face that was looking straight at him, as it seemed, but without seeing him, though the new-comer and his horse looked as if they belonged to the upper stratum of society. The animal was well groomed and cared for, and the rider was a gentleman—at least in outward seeming.

"Pyetmere!" Edward Dalrymple exclaimed, to himself. "What does he want here? No good, I am sure."

He shrank into a corner and listened and watched. No good would have come of revealing his presence, and he might have caused an unpleasant scene.

Lord Pyetmere, for it was he, was evidently there in secret, and whoever the woman was who was waiting for him behind the stone, she did not want her whereabouts proclaimed. Her dress was that of the peasantry about, though somewhat bright in colour and coquettish in detail, put on probably for this meeting with her lover—for a love-meeting it certainly was—though the wild abandon with which the woman threw herself into the arms of the man who came towards showed more of love than did his somewhat matter-of-fact embrace.

"Take care," he said, somewhat roughly, "you don't know who may see you."

"Only the sheep, and they won't tell," she said, and the unseen listener started and wondered whether he were awake or dreaming.

"I am going mad," he said to himself. "This superstitious land is filling me with delusions, and yet—"

He paused and listened again, the woman was speaking, with her arms (dainty white arms, as he could see, wherever sleeves had dropped back), round Lord Pyetmere's neck.

His back was towards Edward Dalrymple as he stood with his companion, and there was something in the set way in which he stood, neither yielding to nor returning the caresses that were lavished on him, that told of almost indifference, if not something colder still. The voice was more muffled now; the woman's head was hidden on his breast, but her words could be heard and their tones recognised.

"You are not glad to see me," she said; "you give me nothing in return for my life—my all."

"That is what all you women say," was the careless answer. "I am here, in this outlandish place, drawn by your wiles and your beauty. What more do you want?"

"Not much," she replied with a gasp and a little sob, "not much, only—"

"Well, there," he said, bending down his head, and kissing her upturned lips, "will that satisfy you, that and the knowledge that I have come to fetch you. You shall go back to the old life, my beauty, and queen it in the old set and—"

"Oh! I know," she replied, bitterly; "you need not go on, until what beauty I have is gone; till some newer and brighter star rises for you. Well, be it so; if it only lasted a month I would risk it to get away from my bondage here."

"I wonder you have not given Carmath a wide berth long before this!"

"I have been nearly doing it," she said, bitterly. "If there was any place I could have got to unseen I would have made for the nearest town and sung in the streets for the means of going on; but I am watched, as I believe women was never watched before. There seem to be eyes in every rock and tree round here, and tongues in every leaf to carry tidings of what I do to the man who rules my destiny. I shall kill him some day!"

"Better take my offer, and come with me."

"I shall, I will; I am ready. If you have money to carry out your plan I will not fail you. You must bring me a cloak. I have no clothes even, except such as these, and everybody knows me hereabouts."

"I will bring a disguise that no one will penetrate. To-morrow morning will see us far away, and by night we shall be out of England; and then, hey! for Paris and freedom!"

"Ah! Paris; the very thought of it is like the pop of a champagne cork; but your wife! Where is she? Is it safe?"

"My wife has come to know that she must not ask questions. I don't interfere in her affairs. Then to-night you will be at the—" the word was whispered and Edward Dalrymple did not hear it, "at nine o'clock!"

"Nine o'clock," she said; "put a seal on the bargain."

She lifted her face, and he stooped and kissed it, and then they went away together—only for a little way. Edward Dalrymple watched them part before they had gone many paces, and then Lord Pyetmere mounted his horse and spurred the animal in the opposite direction from that which his late companion took.

"Mrs. Caraw!" Dalrymple said to himself, as he rose from the short grass and stretched himself. "Ah, well, it is no business of mine now. Poor Caraw! He is cured now, and content. He never need know that I have stumbled across her again. Heaven grant that they do not come face to face with each other in the time to come. She will drift down, down, and he is taking up the rôle of philanthropist. Does she live in the village here, I wonder?"

She did. He discovered that much that very evening. There was a huge bunch of roses, some of them choice and rare, on the table of his room at the inn, and he asked casually if they were grown in the inn garden.

"Oh, sir!" the landlady replied, "they beant out of our garden; they come from the quarry, they do."

"The quarry?"

"Yes, sir—at least, it isn't the quarry now. It was one once they say. It is just a cutting in the hillside, and John Martin has a garden there; grows fine flowers, John do, and makes a sight of money by them."

A little judicious questioning elicited the fact that John Martin was looked upon as a little eccentric. He had possessed the piece of ground in question for some years, but he had not let it to another man lately, while he went off to America or somewhere.

The tenant had been a gardener likewise, and had been bound by various restrictions to do only what his landlord wished, so that the reputation of the quarry might not suffer.

There was a Mrs. Martin, John Martin, when he first took the place, had announced that he was a married man, but nothing had been seen of any wife till very recently, and the village did not know much about her. She held her head very high, and would associate with no one.

It had been early afternoon when Edward Dalrymple had listened to that conversation on the hillside, under the shadow of the great boulder.

In the dusk of the evening, while there was yet light enough to see everything quite distinctly, and a rosy flush in the sky where the sun had gone down, he stood opposite to the gate of the quarry.

It was a lovely little spot. John Martin had an eye for beauty evidently, and the little one-story dwelling was trim and neat, and the garden was a blaze of blossom.

Dalrymple would have passed quietly by without attracting attention if he could, but the master of the house was leaning over the gate, and was not to be passed by in silence.

CHAPTER VII.

JOHN MARTIN looked up as the visitor to the little village came nearer to him, and the young man started back, almost doubting the evidence of

his senses as he marked the alteration that had come upon the man.

When he had claimed his transient wife at the hands of Jocelyn Caraw he had been a somewhat plebeian, but, on the whole, good-looking man, ruddy and healthy-looking—a man not much over thirty years of age, and looking good for another forty years of life.

The face that looked up at him now from behind the bank of feathers that were such a beauty in the garden of the quarry might have been that of a man of sixty, so drawn and white was it.

It seemed distorted by some intolerable agony, either mental or bodily, and the pipe that was between his lips was out.

Edward Dalrymple remembered afterwards that he noted this at the time; he seemed fascinated by the man's appearance.

"Good-evening, Mr. Martin," he said, seeing that he was seen and recognised, and deeming it best to speak. "Is this where you live? You remember me, I see."

"Yes, I remember you," John Martin replied, his face growing a little more human as he spoke. "Are you come to spy out how things are here? Do you want to know whether Mrs. Martin is living contentedly with her lawful husband?"

"Good heavens, no!" Edward Dalrymple said, staring at the man in astonishment. "I am here quite by accident. Till to-day I had no idea there was such a place as Carmath. It is barely two hours since I heard of your living here. Some flowers from your garden brought about the mention of your name."

"And you came out to see what sort of a place mine was, eh?"

"I confess to a little curiosity. It is not unnatural."

"No; I suppose it isn't."

"And being here," Dalrymple went on, "I may ask after Mrs. Martin. Is she well?"

"Quite well."

"And at home?"

For his life the young man could not have helped the question. Knowing what he knew, he expected the mistress of the quarry to be some distance away. She must be even now on her road to the trying place, if not already there.

"At home! Of course she is," was the reply, with a curious look of inquiry; "where else should she be? Where should an honest wife be in the evening but in her husband's house. Would you like me to call her? She might come, for obedience is not a strong point with her; but if you want to see her—"

"Oh, no. I did not mean to ask impertinent questions, and I am sure Mrs. Martin will not care to see me. I am connected in her mind with many unpleasantnesses."

"They don't trouble her now," John Martin said. "She's a quieter woman than when you knew her, Mr. Dalrymple."

"I am glad to think she is contented here," the young man said, hardly knowing how to reply. "Tell her I was glad to hear of her, will you? If she ever hears that I have been in the neighbourhood—"

Was she really in? he asked himself, or was John Martin, for some reasons of his own, concealing the fact that she was out?

He was just turning away when a boy came up with a bundle, and handed it to the gardener.

"Mother said I wasn't to bring 'em till I was quite sure Mrs. Martin was in," he said, "and I saw her go in just now!"

"Yes, she's in. I'll take them to her," John Martin said, taking the bundle. "You don't want to see her particularly, do you?"

"No!"

"That's a good thing, for she's going to bed. Good-night!"

"Good-night, Mr. Martin!" and the boy trooped off whistling; and John Martin went in, and fastened his cottage door.

Something had certainly come about to stop the projected elopement, and the erring wife was safe at home.

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CHAPTER XXXIV.

For an instant the Firs looked so silent and quiet that Flora had quite a pang in her heart lest Eustace Trevanton should be really very bad. Perhaps her guardian had been keeping the truth from her when he said he was not quite so well as usual, and then went on to ask with interest after her experiences in Paris.

The footman gave a loud knock and opened the carriage door. She sprang out without waiting for Winter to open the other. A sudden gust of wind whirled a few dead leaves round her feet, and all her pleasurable anticipations seemed chilled. She forgot the presents, she forgot all the heap of things she had been looking forward to saying, and turned such an anxious face towards him that Winter, surprised at finding the newly-made bride on the doorstep, exclaimed,—

"Lor, my lady, I hope there's nothing the matter!"

She held out her hand to the old servant, reassured by his question; for if her brother had been ill he would have thought it most natural that she should drive down to see him.

"Nothing, thanks, only as my brother didn't come to me I was obliged to go to him. Are you quite well? and are all the ladies in?"

"Yes, my lady, thank you. I've had a touch of rheumatism, but that's owing to the east wind. Walk into the drawing-room, please."

He threw open the door with a swing, and announced in his loudest tones, as if proud of the honour, "Lady Fane!"

Instantly there was a commotion, a chair was upset as the twins rushed forward to greet her. She kissed them affectionately, and allowed herself to be clasped in Mrs. Willoughby's arms, but all the while she was looking beyond them to the sofa where Eustace was lying, supported by his right elbow. He was watching her with eager eyes that shone with joy, and the next minute she kneeling beside him, her arms round his neck, the tears raining from her eyes.

"Come, Flo, I say, don't do that; there's no occasion for waterworks. And what a swell you are looking in your fare!" stroking the long sealskin Newmarket, which was topped by a small toque of the same fur which set off the fairness of her skin.

They crowded round her whilst she squeezed herself on to the small portion of the sofa left by the invalid's long legs, and sitting by his side undid the many packages which she had sent for out of the carriage. Her fears about her brother being relieved, she was like a child displaying her treasures, and there were ecstatic cries of delight as one pretty thing after another was brought out and presented. Emily and Jenny were delighted with lovely mantles in the pink of fashion, Mrs. Willoughby was charmed with a Parisian bonnet, which suited her exactly. There was a pin for Mr. Willoughby's scarf, which he was to wear for the future instead of his old-fashioned tie, and various pretty knick-knacks to adorn the rooms and give them a touch of elegance.

"And then, dear, here's a bag for you when you begin to travel, which I hope will be next year," she said, with a grave, sweet smile. "I dare say you will know a great deal more about Paris than I do by next October, and perhaps you'll get as far as Italy, which we never did."

"It's a beauty!" exclaimed Mrs. Willoughby, as the bag was opened, and all its solid silver fittings disclosed to view, and then she sighed as she looked from the bag to the boy's delicate face. "He will never live to use 'em," she reflected. "They might just as well have given him an Alpine stock or a trapper."

But Flora was indignant with her for that sigh, and talked of the wonders Sir Cavendish was to do for him if his cure were as certain, and the road to it without pain.

"And where is Sir Basil?" asked Emily. "I

suppose he didn't care about turning out after dinner!"

"Indeed he would have come, only Philip Fane dropped in with Mr. Willoughby, and he was obliged to stay with them out of politeness. But he is coming directly," with a cheerful smile.

"Oh! dear," said Emily, looking at her sister, "I wish we had on better dresses. I've got a darn right in the front. Don't you think we had better change?"

"Yes; I could do it in three minutes," and Jenny sprang to the door.

"No, no! Basil won't see it. Never mind, it is much too late," Flora expostulated; but she was a married woman, and was supposed to have forgotten what she might feel in the girls' place.

"Mr. Fane might come in," as Mrs. Willoughby suggested, and it never did to be caught by a single man at a disadvantage.

"It never does to be caught by a double man," said Flora, with a merry laugh. "I never let Basil get the better of me."

"And you are happy, my dear!"

"Oh! so happy," with a sigh of contented longing, and then she added, softly, "There never was a husband like mine."

"I always said so from the first," cried Eustace, triumphantly. "He is a tramp, if ever there was one. It was a clever dodge of mine tumbling into that pond. It led to your first introduction."

"It very nearly led to something else," and Mrs. Willoughby looked grave. "Don't you think you had better go to bed? You didn't sleep last night."

"No, the thought of Flo's coming got into my head," squeezing her hand with his slender fingers, "though I'm 'nobody nowhere' now. What is a brother compared to a husband?"

"I don't think Flora will ever cease to make a fuss with you. You've been the apple of her eye all her life and she has spoilt you through thick and thin."

"I wonder I'm not insufferable," leaning back on his pillows with a smile.

"Perhaps you are, only I forgot to tell you so."

Flora felt perfectly happy as she sat there telling them amusing anecdotes of their fellow-travellers, whilst the twins were beautifying themselves.

"Oh! Eustace, if you had only been with us!"

"My dear!" from the matron; "on a honeymoon!"

"Yes, why not?" with a playful pout. "I would have quarrelled with Basil at once if he ventured to hint that Eustace was *de trop*."

"You see she can't get along without using a French word," a mischievous twinkle in his eyes, and then the door opened, and in came in Mr. Willoughby, with Sir Basil's tall form towering behind him, and Philip Fane, calm, cold, and supercilious, looking over his shoulder. It was a pretty picture which met their eyes in that pleasant room lighted by the mellow light of an old-fashioned moderator.

There was Mrs. Willoughby sitting by the table, the light falling on her smooth, fair hair neatly gathered under her white lace cap, and the knitting needles which she was plying with almost unconscious industry, whilst a little to the left was the high-bred face of Eustace Trevanton, with a red cushion behind his straw-coloured head, an old red shawl thrown over his legs, and the lovely young bride close beside him, her sealskin cloak falling from her shoulders, her white neck looking dawdling in spite of its string of pearls against the dark fur.

Emily and Jenny came in, looking gorgeous in their best dresses, and Philip Fane devoted himself to them in such a gratifying manner that each flattered herself that he thought she was looking nice.

"So they are going to take that boy to town next week!" with a look towards the sofa.

"Yes, if he is well enough, and Flo says we must come up and pay them a visit," said Emily, with glee.

"I am sure I hope you will. London is drier than any ditch that was ever invented,

and what I shall do with Lady Fane I can't conceive."

"What do you mean?" asked Jenny, gravely, thinking the less bachelors had to do with married women the better.

"I mean when that boy slips the hooks. He will as sure as fate. And as she only married on his account it will be no end of a sell."

"She was in love with Sir Basil from the very first," and Emily looked shocked. "And as to Eustace, he is going to be cured. They talk of his going to Paris next year."

"I think he will take a shorter journey and in a shorter time. Are they blind? He's a shadow to what he was. I was a good deal mixed up with some medical students once, and walked the hospitals for a joke. I knew all the signs. Look at his lips, they are not red but purple; look at his eyes, they look as if they had a glittering light inside them; look at his bones, there isn't an ounce of flesh upon them."

"Hush, Flora will hear you!" looking round in alarm.

"No, she never does; but she will listen to me some day. Do you believe in preventments, Miss Willoughby?" applying the name to both by a movement of his eyes. "I believe that you and I will live to see curious changes at Greylands. First there will be sorrow, then coldness, then jealousy, then death, but which of the trio will die, Basil, Flora, or myself, I can't say."

"Oh! Mr. Fane, what nonsense you talk!" cried Emily, with a shiver. "You are not a gipsy! You can't tell fortunes!"

"No, but I can influence them. I can help to make my stories come true, which is more than the gipsies do when they can scan a stranger's hand at the Derby. Come to London and watch. It is grand fun to look on at a game if you are quite sure to understand it."

"I don't know anything about the game," said Jenny, "but I should like to go to London and see the theatres, and all there is to be seen."

"And I should be proud to be your escort," with a low bow.

"Flora, your brother's tired, we had better be off," Sir Basil whispered in her ear.

She gave a startled look at Eustace's face; all the colour had left it as his excitement died out, and surely it was very thin and drawn.

She bade him good-night gravely, and promised to run down to see him in the morning. Then they went away, Philip saying he would enjoy a cigar and a stroll in the moonlight.

CHAPTER XXXV.

SIR BASIL and Lady Fane had no time for dinner-parties or balls before they left again for London, taking Eustace Trevanton with them.

Mr. and Mrs. Willoughby shook their heads, and said he was not strong enough to stand it; but Flora was dying to have him cured, and her husband was so anxious to please her, that neither would listen to reason.

His own house in Hyde Park-gardens had been made ready for them in a hurry. Sir Basil laughed at the old-fashioned furniture, which yet was not old enough to pass muster with the aesthetes. He said that as soon as they had a leisure moment they would furnish it in such a style that Oscar Wilde would lose his senses for envy; but, for the present, they must put up with comfort at the expense of style.

There was no time lost in seeing after the purpose which had brought them to town.

Sir Cavendish Brown, who had but just returned from Kensington, called the next day, and after a short interview with his patient, recommended a week's rest.

"But surely it would be better for him to have the evil removed as soon as possible, and to rest afterwards!" suggested Flora, in her eagerness to have him just like other men.

But the grave old surgeon shook his head.

"Too much haste would ruin everything. We must get up his strength, my dear lady, so we shall certainly do him no harm but good."

Flora had to submit, and trust a man who

knew so much better than herself. No mother could have been kinder or taken more care.

She took him out for a drive every day at first, and pointed out with interest how the grand houses which had been closed for the quiet months were now beginning to open their eyes. Blinds were drawn up, shutters opened, windows cleaned. Gradually the carriages increased in the Park, the horses in the Row, and they began to feel that London was no longer a desert.

They visited the Doré Gallery, where Eustace sat on the velvet cushions for half-an-hour in quiet enjoyment; and went to one or two other places where there were but a few pictures on view. She even proposed to take him to the Fisheries, but Sir Basil remonstrated.—
"My dear, a drive is too much for him. How could he stand a crowd of people and the noise of a band?"

Flora gave it up with a sigh. When they were children they had always had magnificent plans as to the amount they were to see or do during their first visit to London. But now the visit had come off, and they could do nothing.

The week came to an end, and Sir Cavendish Brown proposed to wait a little longer. The weather changed and became cold and wet, and when the carriage came round it was generally sent away empty, for Eustace said it was pleasant on the sofa in the study than driving out where there was no sunshine. Sir Basil, fancying that his wife's spirits were drooping, proposed to send for the Miss Willoughbys, but Flora said,—

"No, let us wait till afterwards, when we can take them about and make them enjoy themselves. They will want to go to the theatre and to concerts. So they must wait."

"Eustace not come down yet?" asked Sir Basil, in surprise, as he came in to luncheon after a visit to his tailor.

"No, he said he was tired, so I had a fire lighted in the dressing-room. The quieter he keeps the stronger he must get—that stands to reason, doesn't it?" with a wistful glance up into his face, as if for encouragement.

"It seems natural. There ought to be no exhaustion in perfect rest," and he laid his hand tenderly on her curls, afraid of speaking the fears which were weighing on his mind.

Philip Fane appeared that afternoon, and Flora came down to the drawing-room to give him five o'clock tea, whilst Sir Basil stayed with her brother.

It was a very dull afternoon, and there was little light in the room, except that which came from the fire. As the flames shot up every now and then amongst the coals a ray of ruddy light fell on Flora's face, and he could see as he sat opposite to her how pale and sad it had grown. Her beauty was the same as ever, but sorrow had chastened it, and altered its character, and he felt as if it were all his cousin's fault. If he had married her he would have taken her to the south of France, to Italy, to Rome—where she would have shone like a star amongst her compatriots. He would have whirled her about from one scene of dissipation to another till she had forgotten this sickly invalid, and all the melancholy thoughts she had left behind in England.

"Your brother is not as well as you hoped?" he said, hesitantly, thinking it was real kindness to make her see the true state of the case.

"Well, I don't know. I think he finds London relaxing. He must be better, you know, really," she said, with a smile, "because he has done nothing but rest."

"But is he better?" looking her straight in the face, whilst she kept her eyes fixed on her tea-cup.

"The pain was very bad last night, but it is easier—certainly easier to-day. I suppose Sir Cavendish Brown is sure to understand his case!"

"I dare say he understands it thoroughly, but these doctors think it part of their vocation to keep their opinions to themselves. Have you considered how you will stand to your husband supposing the operation fails?"

"I don't understand you," raising her eyes

with a puzzled expression in their depths.

"What has Basil got to do with it?"

"He had everything to do with it, as far as I understood the matter," with a peculiar smile on his thin lips. "Was not Trevanion's cure used as the bait to secure his sister?"

The colour rose in her cheeks. She could not forget that she had really accepted Sir Basil in the first instance because she wanted to be with her brother and nurse him after the operation. Her love for her brother was undoubtedly the one thing that had spurred her on to a prompt acceptance, but there was a great deal of love for Sir Basil behind it, and she never meant to confess to anyone—least of all to Philip—that he had not been her first thought.

"I don't think any bait was needed," she said, slowly.

"You don't like to confess it, but there was; and I say Basil must have known if this little scheme fails. He will have won you under false pretences."

"Nothing of the sort," lifting her head defiantly. "He is good to everybody—not only to Eustace. He saved our lives in the first place—perhaps you forget that."

"No, I don't," solemnly. "Fortune has favoured him in every way. Who is the only man who would have risked his life to save you?"

"He was the only man who did. He was the only one who ever troubled himself to wonder if Eustace could be cured. Even good, kind Mr. Willoughby accepted his lameness as a misfortune which couldn't be amended."

"Because he was a high-minded man, with no ulterior motive. Basil worked upon your feelings—he held up a dazzling impossibility before your eyes. Bewildered, puzzled, wild with the new hope, you said, 'Give me this and I will be your wife.' Then, when you were scarcely conscious of what you were saying or doing, he wrung your almost involuntary consent from your lips. And to carry on the farce he has lugged the poor boy up to town, when he might have had a chance, perhaps, if he had only been allowed to be quiet. He parades a heap of doctors before your eyes to prove to you that he is doing his best, and all the while he knows that he might just as well throw the doctors' fees into the Serpentine. He cannot cure the boy, but he must redeem his word. That is the position, and you've got to face it."

"I won't," rising from her seat, in great agitation, "it isn't true—he shall be cured. Oh! Heaven, he shall be!"

"If I could only cure him I'd cut off my right hand to do it, putting down his cup, and coming close to her side. "Flora, you must believe that—you couldn't imagine that I was fiend enough not to wish the poor fellow to pull through."

It was horrible, but she had a fancy that he would be pleased—rather than not—to find that the operation had failed.

"Flora, answer me! Could I have any motive for wishing harm to the boy?"

"How can I tell? You seem to wish to make me miserable; I don't know why," looking down into the fire, with wet lashes.

"By Heaven! that's too unfair!" he exclaimed, with sudden excitement. "You haven't forgiven me because I told you that Basil had no right to marry you. He has no right, and some day I will prove it to you. It will be in my power then to drag him from your arms. Don't you think you had better be more civil to me now? Don't you think a kind word now and then might be of use?"

"A kind word, when you are my enemy!" drawing up her neck.

"Not yours!" looking down into her eyes.

"My husband and I are one," defiantly.

"At present—yes."

"For ever!"

"A woman's for ever—six months. Some day you will cry to me for pity; but I shall remember that you always hated me. Good-bye!"

He pressed her hand tight, then hurriedly departed, leaving her a prey to mingled feelings of terror and disgust.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"BEFORE this sort of thing, you know, I think it is better to make a will," said Eustace, the day before the one fixed for the operation, "so give me a piece of paper, and we'll draw it up between us. I dare say Basil would send for a lawyer."

"Oh, no, dear! Don't bother yourself about that," said Flora, with an inward shudder. "You mustn't tire yourself about anything to-day."

"I must do this. I shouldn't like all my wet things to go to the wrong people. Now, Flo, don't be silly," as he saw her lip trembling. "I shan't die a bit the sooner for it, and it will be such a relief to my mind."

Without a remonstrance she fetched a piece of paper and a pencil, and then placed another cushion behind his back. She felt as if she could not bear it as he wrote down one thing after another with a name against it.

Nobody was forgotten, even George, the gardener's boy at the Firs who had so often drawn his chair, was remembered, and then, when she thought he had come to an end, a pale pink rose in his thin cheeks, as he wrote,—
"My gipsy ring to N. R."

"Do you think Lady Rivers would mind it?" he asked, in a low voice.

A lump rose in her throat as she answered,—

"No, dear, Nests will be pleased, and so will her mother."

Then she put her head down on his pillow, and sobbed as if she would never stop. He let her cry, whilst his own face grew white with exhaustion, and his lips quivered. Then he got his hand—his poor, thin hand—upon her head.

"I don't mind it now. I used to think it was bad to lie still, or to crawl about, when other fellows could run, and row, and play at cricket; but I've got used to it, and—and if anything goes wrong I shan't be leaving you alone, Flo. You've got the best husband that ever was."

"But I'll tell the doctor not to come. He shan't touch you," she gasped. "We can be very, very happy, can't we dear, even if you are a little lame?"

A sweet smile hovered on his lips.

"I haven't thought of you, Flo, as I ought. I was so mad for you to marry Basil, because I thought he was a trump, that I never asked you if you loved him; but you do, dear, don't you?"

"Yes—yes, there's not another man like him. He will take care of us both, and think for us both, and sometimes, perhaps, those wretched mortgages will be paid off, and you will have a sweet young wife of your own."

He shook his head.

"I shan't marry her; but I think she would have liked me if I had tried."

"There could be no objection if you got all right. Lady Rivers has taken a fancy to us both. Oh, darling, be quick and get strong, lest somebody else should carry Nests off."

"Would the somebody else mind her wearing my ring?" twisting it round on his finger.

It was so large for it now that he could scarcely keep it on.

"You will have to ask her, and there mayn't be a somebody else at all. Now you must keep quite still, and I'll read to you."

He leaned his head back on the pillows, and his eyes closed. Flora went on reading for a little while in her sweet, soft voice, and then she stopped, her eyes resting with fond affection on his face.

It seemed to her that it had grown smaller since yesterday; but, of course that must be her fancy. It was very white, but he missed the fresh air of the country, and evidently London did not agree with him. They would take him back as soon as ever they could.

"The doctors will be here at twelve to-morrow," Sir Basil announced, when he came home. "Do you really think your brother can stand it?"

"I don't know. This afternoon I almost thought—"

She stopped, unwilling to frame her thoughts in words, but he guessed what she meant.



"HE'LL WAKE IN A HAPPIER LAND!" SAID SIR BASIL, BROKENLY.

"Well, we must leave it till to-morrow," he said, cheerfully, "and then they will be the best judges. But I'll take care to warn them that we mean to run no risks. I don't think London suits you any better than Eustace."

"I shall be all right when this constant anxiety is over. Do you know when the Rivers are coming up to town?"

"I saw their shutters were unclosed to-day, so I suppose they are back already. Are you anxious for their society?"

"I wanted to ask Noota to five o'clock tea."

"Ah! poor little thing. I fancied she was rather smitten with Eustace. Ask her, by all means, only wait till to-morrow is over."

"Oh! yes; I'll wait till Eustace is well. It would be no use if he couldn't see her."

"Ah! you little match-maker, I thought there was some hidden motive behind the scenes. You are growing as Machiavellian as Philip."

"Have you seen him to-day?"

"Yes," with a sigh; "he always finds me out when he is in want of me. If he would only stick to his profession instead of poking his nose into everybody else's business it would be much better for all of us. You will sing to me, won't you? Your voice always sends the cobwebs away."

"Now, before dinner?" she asked, in surprise.

"Yes. You'll be running up after dinner to see that boy. 'A bird in the hand,' you know."

She sat down to the piano, played a few chords, then sang a song, which was sweet and sad, and seemed in accord with her own feelings.

Sir Basil sat in a chair close to the piano, but he put up his hand to shield his eyes from the light, and she could not see the expression of his face. It was grave and sad as death.

When she finished he asked for another, in a tired voice, and she sang on, song after song, the lights on the piano being the only light in the large twilight room, her voice the only sound in the stillness.

The stillness and the surrounding shadows

weighed down her spirits, and she broke off with a shudder.

"The fire must be out, I'm sure. I feel so cold."

She ran to the fireplace, took up the poker, and hammered at the coals, but no responsive flame came from them.

Sir Basil took the poker from her hand, and laughed at her ineffective efforts.

"Let me try," he said, grandly, but he poked without any effect, for the fire was out. Then he remarked that he was very sorry he had forgotten all about it, and rang the bell for it to be lighted whilst they dressed for dinner.

On their way upstairs they looked into Eustace's dressing-room.

There was a shaded lamp on the table, and the fire was burning brightly, sending cheerful rays against the steel.

Flora stepped on tiptoe to the side of the sofa, and then she looked round and beckoned to her husband.

"You see he is fast asleep. He has been just like that for two hours," she said, in a whisper.

"The long rest must be good for him."

Sir Basil did not answer, only stooped his head lower, and touched the boy's white cheek with his hand.

"Oh, don't!" whispered Flora. "You'll wake him."

"My darling, can't you see?"

He said no more, but put his arm round her, and drew her to his side. Then she began to tremble from head to foot.

"Oh, no, no! He'll wake soon."

"He'll wake in a happier land, where the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain," he said, brokenly.

She gave a cry like a wounded animal, and flung herself down on her knees.

"Oh, Heaven! oh, Heaven! don't let him die! I can't do without him—I can't!"

Sir Basil looked down at her very pitifully with unshed tears in his own eyes. He might have thought that his own love would have been

enough for her; but there was no bitter jealousy—only infinite tenderness and infinite sympathy in the depths of his heart.

He let her grief have its course, let the broken-hearted sister weep over her only brother; and then he raised her half-fainting in his arms, and carried her like a child across the landing into her room.

There he laid her down on the bed, and sat by her side, and held her hand, knowing that no words of his would do her any good as yet, that time alone could help her to bear the burden which Heaven had sent her.

Thus, the very day before the cripple was to be cured by the skill of man, Eustace Trevanion was taken to a better land, where no crutches are needed, for the halt are no longer lame; where no doctors are wanted, because there is no sickness and no pain.

(To be continued.)

CLOUDS that appear to move against the wind indicate a change of weather, because they prove the existence of two air-currents, one warm and the other cold, and the mingling of these frequently causes rain.

THE Ornithological Museum of Salothurn, Switzerland, has come into possession of a bird's nest which is extremely unique. It is a swallow's nest about four inches broad, built entirely of steel watch springs. It was discovered by a workman in one of the big watch factories of that country, who last summer had often seen a swallow fly into the open workshop pick up a bit of metal and fly off to a neighbouring tree. After the young birds had flown away to warmer lands he climbed the tree and found to his astonishment that the nest was composed entirely of discarded watchsprings, but that it was nevertheless quite soft and light in weight.



ISABEL PARQUHAR WAS HALF-RECLINING ON A COUCHE, HOLDING IN HER HAND A BOOK.

THE MISTRESS OF LYNWOOD.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Did Adrienne say how long she should be?" inquired Sir Ralph of his nephew, as the latter joined him and Egerton.

All traces of the storm of agitated feeling through which he had just passed had vanished from Otho's brow, and he was once more the smiling, polished man of the world society knew, looking as if he had neither care nor anxiety to trouble him.

"No," he replied, in answer to his uncle's question.

"What boat did she take?"

"The *Water-Lily*."

"Has she gone out on the water?" asked Lionel, joining in the conversation.

Otho replied in the affirmative, and something in Egerton's tone made the Baronet say, quickly,—

"Don't you think she ought not to have gone alone?"

"I have no doubt she will be all right, but—"

"What?" inquired Sir Ralph, as he paused.

"Well, you see, she is not able to swim, and it is the first time she has ever attempted to manage a boat herself. I think it would have been better if Captain Lynwood had accompanied her."

"I offered to do so, but she was anxious to be alone, and declined my escort," said the officer, in a tone of annoyance as if he thought his courtesy impeached. "If I had imagined she ran the smallest amount of risk you may be sure I should have made her take me, but, as a matter of fact, no idea of it entered my head. I don't see how she can possibly come to any harm—the boat is very steady, and small as has been her practice she understands the art of steering quite well."

"Has she gone up or down the river?" queried Lionel, cutting him short.

Otho hesitated a moment before replying, but Egerton's eyes were fixed very keenly upon him, as he awaited an answer.

"Down," he replied.

"Of course you warned her not to go too far because of the weir?"

"I did not mention the weir, but I told her that when the stream divided she was to keep to the left, and not go farther than the backwater; but I understood she only intended being out for half-an-hour or so."

"In that case she will be quite safe, for unless she pulled hard—which she was not likely to do—she would not reach the weir in less than an hour and a-half," said Lionel, breathing a sigh of relief; "and, of course, if she steered into the backwater, she could not possibly come to harm. It is only beyond that the river becomes dangerous."

Sir Ralph looked at his watch.

"It is nearly one o'clock," he observed to Otho, "and when I met you it was only just half-past eleven; so if, as you say, Adrienne intended being on the water only about half-an-hour, she certainly ought to be back by now. I will go down to the boat-house, and see if I can meet her."

He waved an adieu to the two young men, and set off—not in any way alarmed as to his wife's safety, for he felt sure she would not venture anything like so far as the weir, particularly as he had told her he should be at home at one o'clock, so as to be able to take for her a drive directly after luncheon.

She knew his love of punctuality, and had always been most careful in consequence never to keep him waiting an instant. This morning, however, she had fallen into such deep meditation that she had lost count of time, and been heedless of how quickly the moments drifted away, and how far she was going; but this her husband did not know.

"How fond Sir Ralph is of his wife!" laughed Otho, as soon as the Baronet was out of hearing. "They say truly, there's no fool like an old one. He little knows how ridiculous he makes himself."

"To me there is something pathetic, rather than ridiculous, in his love," responded Lionel, gravely.

"That is because you are more of a poet than I am and prefer seeing the romantic side of things. For my part, I am nothing if not practical."

There was a peculiar intonation in his voice that struck Lionel, who, as has before been said, was a keen student of human nature. He looked up at him, and as the eyes of the two men met, Otho's drooped suddenly, while a dark red flush stole into his cheeks. He turned on his heel, and struck a match against the wall of the house; but as he proceeded to light his cigar, Egerton noticed that his hand was unsteady, and the light wavered, and fell from it.

"Aren't you well this morning?" he said.

"Who—I? Certainly I am—what made you imagine the contrary?" in a startled tone.

"Nothing particular; that is, nothing except your manner, which seemed to me unlike your ordinary self."

Otho laughed, and struck another match, with a steadier hand this time.

"You are fanciful," he remarked, carelessly.

"Perhaps," answered Egerton, "I think I'll say good-bye, as it is getting so late."

He walked quickly down the avenue, and, in spite of his endeavours, was unable to divest himself of a certain uneasy feeling that his late conversation with Otho had engendered on Adrienne's behalf.

"He had no business to let her go out by herself, a delicate girl like that, who has had so little experience of the water," he muttered. And then he took a sudden determination—nothing more nor less than that he would ride down to the weir, and thus satisfy himself.

He had ridden over from King's Dene, and his horse, a spirited chestnut, was waiting for him

outside the lodge, and in charge of the lodge-keeper's son, who was almost as proud at having the care of such a splendid animal as he was glad to get the piece of silver with which his care was rewarded.

Lionel vaulted lightly into the saddle and set off at a quick trot. He was a splendid rider, and looked as much a part of his horse as if the two had been cast in bronze. The way he was going cut straight across a wide curve made by the river and would very soon bring him to the weir, which was, in reality, only a short distance from Lynwood Hall, although, owing to the erratic course of the stream, it was a long way by water.

To say that he was really anxious about Adrienne would, perhaps, be saying too much; but Otho's manner had impressed him very strangely, and he could not get rid of the impression—at any rate he told himself, he might just as well go to the weir and make the assurance of the young girl's safety doubly sure, instead of riding straight home.

Truth to tell, he did not find King's Dene very lively just now, for his father manifested a strong aversion to seeing company of any description; and such a change had lately come over Nathalie that it was difficult to reconcile her with her old self.

She had grown pale, and thin, and worn-looking—a complete contrast to the splendid incarnation of health and vitality that she had formerly been; but, strange to say, she manifested the greatest dislike to hearing any remark on the alteration that had taken place in her appearance; and when Lionel had anxiously entreated her to see a doctor she had laughed at the idea, declared she was as well as she could possibly be, and emphatically declined falling in with his suggestion.

He was very anxious on her behalf, not only because of her health, but on account of her engagement, which puzzled him very considerably. He could not prevail upon her to speak about it, and when he broached the subject she dismissed it as curiously as possible. His father was almost equally uncommunicative, and so Lionel left off putting questions, and resolved to wait until he had seen Farquhar before pursuing his inquiries any further.

He knew he should not have very long to stay, for Nathalie's fiancé had announced his intention of visiting King's Dene very shortly, and Lionel looked forward to making his acquaintance with a good deal of curiosity, that was not lessened by a prejudice he had somehow imbibed for his future brother-in-law.

Of his father's pecuniary embarrassments, and the mortgage that encumbered his inheritance, he was perfectly ignorant; for Mr. Egerton had decided that, as matters had turned out, there was no necessity for acquainting his son with the story of his reckless speculations, and their lamentable result, and Nathalie had, of course, agreed to his wishes, and preserved a rigid silence regarding them.

But it was not of these things Lionel was thinking as he rode swiftly through the country lanes that led to his destination; the picture of Adrienne as she had appeared when he saw her last, in a white flannel dress, with a bunch of forget-me-nots at her waist, haunted him with a pertinacity that he did not attempt to explain, and effectually banished all other ideas.

Very soon the noise of falling water warned him he was near the weir, so he dismounted and tied his horse to a tree and then scrambled through a gap in the hedge, and found himself on the bank of the river, looking round anxiously to assure himself the object of his thoughts was nowhere in sight.

The water came foaming down, breaking into spray and churning itself into a volume of white froth as it fell.

Lionel shuddered as he thought of how quickly a frail boat like the *Water-Lily* would be dashed to pieces in those stormy depths.

Even as the thought shaped itself in his mind he gave a sudden start; for there, a little way above, he saw the *Water-Lily* herself, being borne towards him with a rapidity that increased

every moment; and down in the bottom of the boat crouched a white-robed figure, whose agonised blue eyes were fixed upon him with piteous appeal.

He required no time in order to realise the extent of her peril. It flashed upon him the self-same moment he caught sight of her, and the question of how she was to be saved simultaneously presented itself.

There was only one way—to swim across, and catch hold of the boat before it reached the weir, and in fewer seconds than it takes to tell it Lionel, resolved to save her or perish in the attempt, had flung off coat and waistcoat, pulled off his boots, and struck out vigorously from the shore, earnestly praying that he might be in time. If he were not, and the boat were dashed over the weir, its occupant must inevitably perish.

He was not near enough to see how white she was, and how her hands were clasped together and stretched towards him, while—was it fancy, or did her lips murmur his name!

He was a powerful swimmer, but for all that he found the task he had set himself well-nigh too hard for his strength. The current was so strong that it was almost impossible to breast it, and the little boat was swept onward with frightful rapidity.

On and on he swam, still in the extremity of his fear that he should be too late, and he redoubled his efforts to an extent that appeared superhuman.

Suddenly, recognising that it was useless to continue his attempt to swim against the stream, he turned round and let it carry him in the direction of the weir, guiding himself to that part of it where he saw the *Water-Lily* must come.

There were several stakes fixed at intervals along the top, and he caught hold of one of them and held firmly by it with the left hand, while with the right he seized the boat, and stopped it in its downward career.

The feat was one requiring a marvellous degree of strength as well as swiftness and dexterity in execution, and afterwards he could hardly have told how he accomplished it, but accomplish it he did; and Adrienne, as she came out of the semi-swoon in which terror had plunged her, and looked up into his eyes, instead of thanks, said, simply,—

"I knew you would save me!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

AFTER he left Nathalie Egerton on the terrace at Lynwood Hall that moonlit night, when they had parted for ever, life seemed a very different thing to Hugh Cleveland than it had done when he had looked forward to spending it with her. It was as if a cloud had fallen on a sunny landscape, blotting out all its brightness and beauty, and making it desolate with a desolation that nothing could retrieve.

Enthusiastic in everything that he undertook, he had set his heart on winning her, and the disappointment of wounded love was far bitterer than it would have been to one of colder or more apathetic temperament.

He had spoken truly when he told her she had killed all the best part of him, for his belief in her had been so strong that when he found, as he imagined, that it was justified, and his estimate of her character had been false from beginning to end, he was ready to include all her sex in one sweeping condemnation, and declare that goodness and purity were attributes that none of them possessed.

Greatly as he admired her beauty it was not that alone which had fascinated him. Her supreme truthfulness, her hatred of conventionality, and a certain grand simplicity which he thought he saw in her nature, all combined to attract him, and he had felt for her that passion which only comes to a man once in his life, and which no other woman would ever have power to awake within him again.

He went back to his dingy rooms in London—the rooms where he had dreamed of her in the

old days, when her love lay like a halo on everything he did, and when he had cherished visions of a future in which they walked side by side, while her voice encouraged him in looking forward to a fame that he felt sure he should sometimes compel.

Work had seemed so light then—labour had been easy, and comparative poverty had no power to discourage him; for did not each sweep of the brush, each touch on the canvas, bring him so much nearer to his goal!—and was she not ready and willing to wait until that goal was achieved?

He came back, but so changed that his landlady—a portly widow of uncertain age, who took a great interest in his welfare—immediately told her intimate friends that she was sure her lodger was in a "gallopin' consumption," and did her best to comfort him by advising cod liver oil, and an immediate visit to a doctor of her acquaintance who had been known to cure "cases in their very last stages!"

Cleveland took little notice of her mournful prognostications, and hardly more of the remonstrances of his own friends, all of whom were considerably puzzled by his listless manner and haggard face.

"Why don't you go out?" they said. "You know there are heaps of people who would be only too glad to invite you."

"They wouldn't make the mistake a second time when they saw what a wet blanket I was," he replied, smiling bitterly. "Besides, I hate the sight of a crowd of people. I am much better alone."

"You are getting misanthropic. You will be for retreating into a monastery after awhile," they said, again, laughing at the savageness of his tone, and Hugh muttered that it was not unlikely.

"Work, man, work!" exclaimed one of his old college friends, who was already beginning to found a name for himself at the Bar. "There is nothing like labour for making a fellow forget his troubles."

But Hugh could not work; the cunning had departed from hand and brain, and he threw down his palette and brushes in despair.

"It's no good trying!" he said, one day, as he got up from his easel. "How can I paint while my heart is not in my work!"

Some words of Tennyson came in his head, and he repeated them over, bitterly,—

"Comfort—scorned of devils! That is truth the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering
happier things."

He seized his hat and went out, wandering into Kensington Gardens, but quite unconscious of where he was going. The London season was nearly over, and there were not very many people about—a fact on which Hugh congratulated himself.

Suddenly his attention became attracted by a lady who was coming towards him, and who swayed to one side as if attacked by giddiness. She paused a moment, then staggered to a seat that chanced to be near, and sat down.

Cleveland paused too, in indecision, but a glance at the lady's white face decided him, and he went up to her.

"Are you ill?" he said, and he was conscious of something in her features that seemed familiar, although he could not believe that he had ever met her before.

She was a woman of about eight or nine-and-twenty, handsome rather than otherwise, and with very dark eyes and hair, and an appearance that may be best described as distinguished, an effect considerably heightened by her elegant attire.

She looked up, and tried to smile in answer to Hugh's question.

"A sort of vertigo seized me, but I am not ill, thank you," she said; "at least, I shall be all right in a minute or two."

"Can I assist you in any way?"

"I think not, thank you."

"At any rate, I will stay by you until you have recovered," he said, and as a matter of fact he was astonished at his own persistence.

He sat down on the opposite end of the seat, and waited for about ten minutes, not looking at her, but making figures on the ground with the point of his walking-stick.

When he did glance up, he found her eyes fixed upon him rather keenly, as if she found the study of his face interesting.

"I think, after all, I will avail myself of your kindness," she said, without the faintest shade of embarrassment in voice or manner. "I live quite near—in De Vere Gardens—and if you will give me your arm, I shall be very much obliged."

He offered it instantly, and escorted her home. Neither spoke on the way, but when they got to the door she took a card from her pocket and gave it to him.

"I thank you very much for your kindness," she said, with a grateful, upward glance of her liquid eyes. "May I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you, and renewing my thanks on some future occasion?"

He bowed, and muttered something inaudible, as the footman opened the door, and, after he had turned away from the house, he looked at the card. It bore this inscription:—

"ISABEL FARQUHAR."

"Farquhar—Farquhar!" he muttered, below his breath; "I wonder if she is any relation to Gilbert Farquhar!"

Perhaps it was this coincidence of names that helped to impress the incident on his memory; at any rate, it haunted him with such singular pertinacity that a day or two later he called at No. —, De Vere-gardens, and inquired for Miss Farquhar—rather uncertain whether he was right in assuming the lady to be unmarried.

The same footman who had opened the door before answered his knock, and at once admitted him.

"My mistress said that if you called I was to ask you to please come in, sir," he said; and Hugh followed him upstairs, glancing round with artistic appreciation at the tasteful and luxurious decorations that on all sides met his eye.

Presently the servant paused, and drew aside a crimson velvet portière, ushering the young artist into a room where the light came in a soft, rosy glow through lace-shrouded windows of stained glass.

The floor was of different polished woods, on which Oriental rugs and the skins of animals were spread, while divans, couches, and easy-chairs, covered in Persian fabrics, lent the apartment a certain Eastern air, that was enhanced by the odour of some scented pastilles burning in a tiny bronze vase in a corner, and close to a stand of palm ferns, which formed a miniature forest of tropical foliage.

Birds of brilliant plumage twittered in gilded cages in front of the windows, and flowers filled every vase and jar, permeating the atmosphere with their perfume.

Isabel Farquhar half-reclined on one of the couches, holding in her hand a book that she was not reading, and looking singularly in character with her surroundings.

She wore a dress of gold-coloured silk, so soft and pure of texture that it fell without any artificial draping into the most graceful folds, and sharply outlined the curves of its wearer's figure, which, if a trifle too fully developed, was, nevertheless, statuesquely beautiful in its proportions.

She sprang up, and advanced a few steps, holding out her hand.

"I am so glad to see you! I was most anxious to have an opportunity of renewing my expressions of gratitude for your kindness the other day!" she exclaimed.

Hugh was rather embarrassed by this over-enthusiasm.

"Indeed, you make too much of what you are pleased to term my 'kindness,' he answered. "I consider myself the debtor to a lucky accident, although, as a matter of fact, I was not able to render you much assistance."

"More than you think, I should probably have fainted through sheer nervousness if I had felt myself alone when the giddiness attacked me, whereas the mere sense of a protector being

at hand enabled me to retain my self-possession. Do you live near here?" she said, changing the subject abruptly.

He told her his place of residence.

"And you are an artist?" she added, quickly. "How did you guess that?" he asked, smiling.

"It did not need much penetration. Certainly you do not wear your hair long, neither is your coat of shabby velvet; but there is something in your face that proclaims your profession with equal certainty."

"You are very penetrating," he observed, with a touch of satire in his voice that she was quick to observe.

"Perhaps sympathy helps me," she returned, quietly. "I dabble in art myself."

"What branch of it?"

"Not crewel needlework," she said, laughing.

"Would you like to see any of my efforts?"

"Very much, indeed."

She led the way to the end of the room, and, drawing back the rich plush curtain, showed a sort of studio, round which were scattered statues and bronzes, Etruscan vases, mingled with rich bits of colour; up in one corner an easel stood, from which she pulled aside the covering, and disclosed an almost completed study of a woman's head.

Hugh looked at it very attentively; he was used to the *dilettante* efforts of lady-students, for which he cherished a most profound contempt; but this was something quite different, as one hasty glance was sufficient to assure him.

There was a breadth, a vigour, a boldness of conception that few female artists achieve, and that very much astonished him in an amateur.

"Well," said Miss Farquhar, who had been watching him, "what do you think of it?"

"I think it shows great genius, but the execution is more like a man's than a woman's," he replied, candidly.

She laughed carelessly, and dropped the covering over it again.

"I have been told that before, and I am inclined to believe it. I consider it high praise; for my sex, with one noble exception, have not attained any great distinction in the Temple of Art, and I am ambitious. But now tell me something of your own work."

Hugh's brow clouded at the question.

"There is little enough to tell. I have done nothing lately."

"But how is that?"

"I have lost interest in it."

"Then you have been in trouble," she said, shrewdly. "Great trouble, I should imagine."

He did not answer, and with inflexible tact and delicacy she changed the subject, and began showing him the different objects of art the room contained, and they were very numerous, and bore witness to their owner's taste and judgment, as well as wealth.

Cleveland was interested in spite of himself, and the time seemed to fly away with marvellous rapidity. To watch Miss Farquhar herself was a pleasure. Her movements were so graceful and full of a certain Eastern languor, entirely different to anything he had ever seen in one of his own countrywomen; and although her face could not have been described as beautiful there was a fascination in it even more powerful than beauty itself. Moreover, her dark, soft eyes gave suggestions of a fiery and passionate temperament veiled beneath the serene quietude of her ordinary demeanour, and Hugh found himself speculating as to unknown depths in her nature that no plummet-line had yet sounded.

It was strange how quickly he felt at ease with her, and how natural it seemed to find himself talking to her—talking to her in an almost confidential strain, indeed, for she contrived to break through the reserve with which he had at first encased himself, and they were speedily on the footing of intimate acquaintances, if not friends. All the while he was anxiously wondering whether she was related to the Farquhars whose name he had such good cause to remember, and presently she enlightened him on this point.

"You must come to one of my 'evenings,' and I will introduce you to my brother," she

said. "We live here together, he and I. Perhaps you know him already, though?"

"What is his name?" he asked, growing pale.

"Gilbert Farquhar. Ah! I see you know him by your start of recognition. Can you come to-morrow night?"

"I am afraid not," answered Hugh, hastily.

"I think I have an engagement."

"You think you have!" archly. "Can't you be sure on such a point?"

"Well, then, I am sure of it."

"In that case I shall have to defer the introduction, for Gilbert is going into the country the day after to-morrow."

"To King's Dene?" asked Cleveland, forgetting himself in his interest.

She flashed a rapid glance at him.

"Yes, to King's Dene. You know the place?"

"I was staying near there a month or two ago," he answered, confusedly.

"Then you doubtless heard of my brother's engagement?"

"Yes."

"Do you know Miss Egerton?"

"A little."

"Then you can tell me something about her, for I have never seen her, and am anxious to know what she is like. Of course I have heard Gilbert speak of her, but he is in love, so what he says cannot be trusted. Is she handsome?"

"I believe she is considered so."

"But do you consider her so?"

"Yes."

"That is satisfactory so far—brief, and to the point, as answers to questions should be. Is she dark or fair?"

"Dark."

"How dark—as dark as I am?"

"It is quite a different sort of darkness; her complexion is brown, rather, and she has a brilliant colour."

"Not olive like mine, without a touch of red to redeem it!" laughed Isabel. "Ah, there are no complexions like English girls possess."

"You are English, are you not?"

"Only half-English. My mother was a Greek, so that accounts for my pale skin. But I don't want to leave the subject of Nathalie Egerton—tell me about her."

"I have nothing to tell," said Cleveland, who felt a curious mixture of pain and pleasure in hearing the name of the girl he loved. He congratulated himself on the calmness with which he spoke it, but he was wrong in thinking he deceived Miss Farquhar, whose eyes were as keen-lighted as her brother's and who, after her visitor had departed, said to herself, as she watched him from the window,—

"There have been some love-passages between him and Gilbert's fiancée. I wonder how far they went, and if I shall be able to find out from him!"

The chances were in favour of her doing so, for Miss Isabel Farquhar generally contrived to find out all she wanted to know in a matter that interested her, as this did.

CHAPTER XIX.

AFTER a very great difficulty, Lionel contrived to swim to the bank, drawing the boat with him, and there he helped Adrienne ashore. Her calmness and self-possession astonished him, for although she had evidently been aware of her perilous situation, she had not manifested the slightest alarm.

"How is it you were not frightened?" he asked, securing the *Water Lily* to the stump of a tree.

"I was frightened—very frightened—until I saw you," she answered, simply, quite unconscious of the significance of her answer.

Lionel's face flushed, and his tone involuntarily softened when next he spoke.

"And did your alarm cease when you saw me?"

"Oh! yes—at least, so far as I myself was concerned. My only fear was on your account, for I

did not know but that the current might have proved too strong for you to resist."

She hesitated a moment, then held out both her hands, and lifted her blue eyes—suffused with tears—to his. "How shall I thank you for saving my life, Mr. Egerton!—words seem quite inadequate."

"Then do not attempt to use them," he interposed, gravely, raising the pretty hands to his lips.

"But I must!" she exclaimed energetically; "I cannot allow such a service to go unrecognised."

"Believe me I should be infinitely better pleased if you would not mention it again."

She looked at him for a moment in silence.

"Do you really mean this?"

"I really mean it—every word."

"Then I will obey your wishes," she said, after another thoughtful pause; "but, in return, you also must promise not to hint that I was in danger."

"Why not—if I may ask?"

"Because Sir Ralph would be sure to censure Captain Lynwood for allowing me to go out by myself."

"And justly too!" exclaimed Lionel, warmly. "I cannot sufficiently blame his carelessness."

"But it was not his fault; it was mine alone, for I wished him to leave me."

"That makes no difference whatever—he knew the river was dangerous below Lynwood Hall. Now, if you had gone up, towards King's Dene, it would have been quite a different thing."

"Perhaps he didn't think I should come so far," murmured Adrienne; "at all events, I am very anxious he should not incur his uncle's anger on my account, and so I would rather nothing was said about the accident—as you are willing to forego the praise your heroism deserves," she added, with a smile.

"As for that, I should prefer no one knew I had an impromtu bath except yourself, but, as I said before, I think Lynwood ought to get the blame he so richly deserves. Still, if you wish it to be kept secret—"

"I do, very much," she said, emphatically, and after that Lionel could do nothing but acquiesce in her desire, although sorely against his will.

"I will walk home across the fields," Adrienne announced. "I don't think I dare venture back by water," shuddering. "I suppose the boat will be all right here!"

"Yes, if you give it in charge of a man at the mill. I would offer to do it for you, but my wet clothes might excite remark, and that is to be avoided, as you wish the affair kept secret."

"You had better make all haste home and get into dry garments," she returned, with some anxiety. "I hope you won't catch cold."

"No danger of that; I am hardened against the weather by this time, and wet harms me no more than it would a retriever. Nevertheless, I suppose I had better wish you good-bye, as this is just the time I am most likely to reach home unobserved."

He shook hands and left her, and was soon on his horse, galloping homewards.

Adrienne watched him till he was out of sight, then told the man at the mill to look after the *Water-Lily*, and set out towards the Hall, determining that no one should know of the accident that had befallen her.

She would not allow herself to blame Ocho for conduct that she was bound to admit was thoughtless in the extreme, but tried to excuse it by telling herself that it was some time since he had been on that part of the river, and he had forgotten that she would be likely to run any risk from the weir. She was quite aware that she had, in a measure, taken his place by her marriage with Sir Ralph, and it had been a constant endeavour on her part to atone for having done so.

Still, it was less of him than of Lionel she was thinking, as she walked through the shady lanes, where convolvulus and briony were twining in the hedges, in place of the wild roses that had

blossomed there a few weeks ago. That he should have been her rescuer did not seem at all strange, for already her imagination had elevated him into a hero, whose province was to perform deeds of valour and knightly daring, and it appeared the most natural thing in the world for him to be on the spot in time to prevent the boat from going over the weir—so natural, indeed, that it had not even occurred to her to ask how it was he came to be there at that precise juncture.

Meanwhile, very different ideas were surging through Egerton's brain as he rode home, more excited by the adventure than he had ever been in battle-fields, or when his life had been in deadly peril in a tiger hunt in India. He could not understand the conduct of Ocho Lynwood, who, he felt sure, must have known quite well the danger Adrienne incurred by venturing near the weir.

"Is it possible he could have had a motive in letting her go?" he whispered to himself, and grew pale at the horror of the idea. "Her life makes all the difference in the world to his position, and he never used to be over-scrupulous in the means he took to secure his ends. I wonder, if I am wronging him by my suspicions! They would never have occurred to me but for the strangeness of his manner this morning, and the enormous stake at issue. Heaven forgive me if they are baseless!"

Whether they were baseless or not he could not get rid of them, try as he might, but, all the same, he decided not to give the slightest hint of them to Sir Ralph, or to anyone else, but to remain silent, and watch the progress of events. Unconsciously he constituted himself Adrienne's guardian—and indeed she needed one, for her innocent truthfulness laid her open to any attack that Ocho might wish to make against her.

As a consequence of his resolve, Lionel was at Lynwood Hall oftener than ever now, and the mutual secret between himself and Sir Ralph's young wife seemed to have the effect of drawing them closer together than before, although neither of them was aware of it.

As a matter of fact, they were like two children playing on the edge of a cliff, which might, at any moment, crumble beneath their feet, and precipitate them both into the gulf below, and, like children, they remained unconscious of the risk they ran.

Whatever Ocho may have felt as he saw Adrienne return safe and sound from the expedition that he had imagined might have such a different ending, he was wise enough to say nothing, and did not even inquire how far she had gone, or why she had walked back, instead of coming by water.

Sir Ralph was quite satisfied with her explanation that she had got tired of rowing, and had left the boat at the mill, but he exacted from her a promise that she would never in future venture on the river alone—a promise she was quite willing to give, and kept most religiously.

About this time Mr. Gilbert Farquhar arrived at King's Dene, and Lionel was introduced to his sister's fiancé.

It cannot be said that the banker made a very favourable impression on his prospective brother-in-law, who was a pretty accurate observer of human nature, and who, if his years were comparatively few, had yet had a manifold experience of his fellow-men. He was accustomed to look below the surface, and it seemed to him that for all his polished manners, Farquhar was not a gentleman, and therefore no fit mate for his beautiful sister.

What had induced her to consent to the betrothal he could not understand, for he thought he knew her too well to believe that her suitor's immense wealth would influence her, and yet the man himself was one of the last he imagined she would have chosen.

"Women are 'kittle-cattle,'" he said to himself, as he mentally argued the point, but found no satisfactory solution of the difficulty. Even "Solomon, with all his wisdom, failed to understand them, so it is not likely I should succeed."

Nathalie's demeanour, too, puzzled him more

than ever. She quietly accepted Farquhar's attentions, but they did not seem to afford her much pleasure, and even the costly presents he lavished upon her failed to awaken any great interest; although, as a matter of fact, she was very fond of jewellery, and did not possess enough to make her indifferent to her lover's handsome gifts.

On the other hand, she made no effort to avoid him, accompanied him for walks or drives when he asked her, and behaved more like a dutiful wife than an exasperated mistress.

One morning Lionel found her alone in the library.

"Where is Mr. Farquhar?" he asked, looking round, and then taking a seat beside her.

"In the study, I believe, talking business, with papa."

"I thought I saw him out in the garden with you not long ago?"

"So he was, but papa wanted him, and he left me."

"He seemed to be in deep conversation with you," added Lionel, looking at her earnestly, "so deep, that although I had come out for the purpose of seeking you, I did not feel justified in interrupting a *tête à tête* that appeared to be so interesting."

"It was on a somewhat important subject," she replied, composedly. "He was asking me to fix the wedding-day."

"Indeed! And did you do so?"

"Yes."

"When is it to be?"

"The first week in September."

"So soon!"

"Do you think it soon?" asked Nathalie, quietly. "I thought so too, but Mr. Farquhar disagreed with me, and so I yielded the point."

Lionel sat silent for a few minutes; then he seized his sister's hand, and gazed very fixedly into her eyes.

"Nathalie! We were always good friends, were we not?"

"Always!" she returned, emphatically.

"We never had a quarrel in our lives, and our love for each other was deeper and truer than that of ordinary brother and sister. Is it as deep and true now as it was in our childhood, my dear?" She returned his gaze with one as steadfast.

"Yes, I think so—at least so far as I am concerned, I am sure of it."

"And you need not doubt me, for years had no power to lessen my affection, and it has even grown stronger during these few months that we have been together, although I have seen comparatively little of you. I have reminded you of those old days, because then we had no secrets from each other, whereas now—" he paused, and he could see that she had grown paler, and that she was trembling—"now you are less open with me, and I have a sort of feeling that you are hiding something from me."

If he could but have known what it was, and that she was sacrificing herself for his sake and her father's!

But he did not know it, and Nathalie resolved he never should. She was not the woman to do things by halves, and having once determined on her course of action, she would go on to the bitter-end, without a thought of self, or turning back.

"Years bring changes," she said gently, "and responsibilities as well. I could tell you everything before you went to India, for my secrets, if I had any, were all my own. Now it is different, and if I am less open with you, it is because I must not betray the affairs of other people."

He bent down and kissed her brow.

"You are right, my sister, and I will respect your silence; nevertheless, I must ask you one question, and I implore you to answer it truthfully. Is this contemplated marriage of yours one of inclination?"

"What do you mean?" she said, trembling, and looking at him with dilated eyes.

"I mean, is Mr. Farquhar the man of your choice?"

"He is the man I wish to marry," she replied.

"But has he gained your love?"

"Lionel!" she exclaimed, in desperation, "there are some things which even you have no right to ask, and this is one. I tell you I am quite willing to become Gilbert Farquhar's wife, and this must suffice you."

"You are sure you are not coerced—your inclinations are in no wise forced!" he persisted, undaunted by her rebellious tone.

"How could I be coerced, and who do you think would attempt to force my inclination?" she said, with a laugh, in which there was very little mirth. "You speak like a man in a novel."

"Do I! My feelings are, nevertheless, very real, but if I have your assurance that you are fulfilling this engagement of your own free will I will say no more, and only hope you may be happy."

"Then I give you that assurance. I marry Mr. Farquhar of my own free will," she repeated, emphatically, and as she said the words she rose and left the room.

After her departure, Lionel remained for some minutes in the same attitude of deep thought, mentally revolving what she had said, and after a great deal of cogitation, arrived at the conclusion that he had done all he could in the matter, and that further insistence on his part would only embarrass Nathalie, since she was so determined to carry her point.

One of two alternatives presented itself to his mind—either his sister was really in love with Farquhar, or she was tired of her present humdrum life, and had made up her mind to escape from it by marrying him.

"She might, at least, have chosen a gentleman," he muttered, and then got up, feeling a keen sense of disappointment that Nathalie had proved herself no less changeable and craving for excitement than the rest of her sex. He had set her on a very high pedestal, as being above these womanly weaknesses and vanities, and it was hard to find his estimate had been, after all, a false one.

(To be continued.)

MRS. ESMOND'S GOVERNESS.

—101—

(Continued from page 369.)

Edward Dalrymple hung about for some time after the hour named for the meeting of the lovers, but no sound came from the locked-up cottage, and he went back to his inn to find the landlady preparing to go to bed, and wondering not a little at her guest's absence. Ten o'clock is a late and dissipated hour to be out of bed in such places as Carnmath.

When he woke in the morning the household was astir, and the first news with which he was greeted was the information that John Martin's wife had gone amissing, and was supposed to have run off in the middle of the night.

There had been a gentleman hanging about of late, and she had been seen to meet him more than once; and it seemed pretty evident to the good folks of the village that they had gone together. Her husband could tell nothing but that she was gone.

He had slept heavily, and never heard her moving about. The relations between them were what the newspapers call "strained" when they are writing of royal quarrels; and he had been in the habit of occupying a little sitting-room, and leaving her to her own devices in the more comfortable apartment below.

They had had no special quarrel—she had been rather more compliant and gentle than usual of late. He had not the slightest clue to her whereabouts.

All the village knew of the relations between the husband and wife. There was nothing extraordinary in Martin's not hearing her moving about if she had done it quietly; and no one was very much surprised at the end that had come to the uncomfortable state of things at the quarry.

So she had gone, after all!

Edward Dalrymple wondered a little how she had managed to alter her arrangements. He had heard the hour named quite distinctly, though he did not catch the place, and she was in the cottage at nine o'clock, for he had heard the church clock strike before he was out of sight of the place.

It was no business of his. It made him feel uncomfortable. He wished that he had never found out anything about John Martin and his wife. He could not get them out of his head.

He started eastward the next day, and after about a week found himself at Plymouth, and there in a hotel, very ill, he found Lord Pysmère. He saw his lordship's name on the list and asked a question or two of the head waiter.

The gentleman was very ill, he was told. Some sort of fever, not infectious, brought on, as far as they could learn, from his, maybe, exposure to the air after a hurried ride. He was quite alone except for his servant. There was no lady with him. They all devoutly wished there was, for his man seemed somewhat stupid and very helpless in sickness.

"Will you see if he will see me?" Edward Dalrymple asked. "I know him, and may be of some service to him, perhaps."

"You can see him, sir, if you wish," the waiter said. "But he won't know you; he's quite off his head."

Off his head he certainly was, rambling about all sorts of things, but with his latest villainy uppermost in his head. He went on persistently about the meeting with Mrs. Martin at nine o'clock, and wearied them with a constant "Why doesn't she come!" and denouncing some power that had doomed him to wait for ever in the mist that was chilling him to the bone, and the wind that cut through him with biting chill.

It was many hours after his old acquaintance arrived before he sank into a troubled sleep. When he woke from it he was better, and Dalrymple had resolved to stay near him for awhile, and get at the heart of the mystery, if he could.

Wherever the erring woman was, she was not with Lord Pysmère, if she was really gone from Carnmath. It looked uncommonly as if she had been making her old lover serve as a cat paw while she went off with someone else.

"What the deuce brings you here!" was Lord Pysmère's first salutation to his former acquaintance, when he was strong enough to talk to him. "How did you come to know where I was?"

"I learned by accident you were here. I have known you where in Cornwall for some time."

"The deuce you have! Who told you?"

"My own eyes and ears. I saw you at Carnmath."

Lord Pysmère's answer to this information was to break out into some very unparliamentary language, indeed, and bestow his curses freely on Carnmath and everybody in it, and then to demand with more objurgations whether Dalrymple's business there was to follow and spy upon him.

"Certainly not," the young man replied. "I did play the spy once by accident, but what I saw and heard I kept to myself. Do you know what you are credited with in that primitive little place, Pysmère?"

"I neither know nor care, so I never see the place again!" was the angry retort. "I was made a fool of there, and no man cares for that."

"By Darine Vane!"

"How do you know?" asked Lord Pysmère, astonished. "Who told you?"

For answer Edward Dalrymple related how he had been an unseen witness of what passed between the gardener's wife and his lordship, and told him how the woman had vanished, as it was thought, with him.

"Not with me!" Lord Pysmère said, with an oath. "As I am a living man, not with me!" I meant it, Dalrymple! I did mean to take her with me to Paris. She made me believe she cared for me enough to risk the future and go, and I appointed a place and time to meet her.

I kept the appointment; she did not, curse her! From the moment when you saw us part I have never set eyes on her!"

He was speaking the truth, there could be no doubt of it; he had been made use of in some way. The woman had disappeared in a clever fashion, leaving the odium of her wrong-doing upon him. She was worse than ever she seemed to be, and was hardly worth another thought.

"A lucky escape for me," Lord Pysmère said, as Edward Dalrymple wished him good-bye. "Enough to make a fellow forewear the sex altogether. And she swore she loved me, the jade, while she was planning a journey with some other man. I am well rid of her."

A year passed away, and the flowers were blooming again, and Edward Dalrymple was in Scotland with his mother, when one morning at breakfast Mrs. Dalrymple put down the newspaper she was glancing through with a half-uttered—

"How horrible!"

"What is horrible, mamma dear?" asked her son.

"Murders and all sorts of things," replied the lady, oracularly, "at that place with the queer name, where you stayed a night last year."

"Many Cornish towns have queer names," Mr. Dalrymple said, chipping an egg. "Which particular one is it?"

"Carnmath."

"Carnmath! Let me see, mother, dear."

She handed him the paper, and he forgot his breakfast, while he read the solution of the mystery that had puzzled him so long. The paragraph was headed, "A Mystery Solved," and ran as follows:—

"A curious story of a murder comes to us from a remote village in the extreme west of Cornwall, and the interest of it is enhanced by the fact that the discovery is due to the celebrated bloodhound, 'Ajax,' purchased last year by Archibald Chisley, Esq., M.P. for Chedlington.

"The hon. gentleman was on a walking tour through Cornwall. Passing through a small village in one of the wildest of the western districts, he stopped to admire the singular beauty of a cottage and garden situated in a disused stone quarry. He was told that the high cultivation and extreme beauty of the place were due to the fact that the proprietor was a skillful florist, and made a fair living out of it, even in that remote region, being exceptionally clever in the perfecting of roses, and supplying several London houses throughout the summer with rare blooms.

"The owner of the place was lying ill at the time of the hon. gentleman's visit, but his deputy courteously asked him to walk round the garden, the most beautiful and prolific part of which was invisible from where he stood. The dog entered with him, but no notice was taken, as 'Ajax' is remarkably gentle and docile, and follows closely to heel. Nothing occurred till Mr. Chisley had got round to the back of the house, where, in a far corner of the garden, a labourer was digging in a bed of fine standard roses.

"At the edge of the bed he had made a large hole for the purpose, it seemed, of burying leaves and rubbish. Into this hole the dog sprang, knocking down the man who was at work, and at once beginning to tear up the earth, and do much damage to the flowers in his frantic efforts to get at something which was concealed underneath.

"It was with the utmost difficulty that he was dragged away; and when at length, by the united efforts of his master and the men about the place, he was dragged out, it was with a torn rag in his mouth, and the fact laid bare that there was a dead body lying at no great depth below the soil.

"Help was soon at hand, and in a very short time the corpse of a woman was exhumed, whom those present had no difficulty in recognising, in spite of the lapse of time, as the missing wife of the florist!

"She was supposed to have run away from her

husband about a year ago, and from what is known of her former history no one appears to have doubted that such was the case.

"Steps were at once taken for the arrest of the husband on suspicion of murder; but all doubt has been set at rest by the man's full confession.

"If the deed had not been discovered in the way it was, a letter which he had written to the clergyman of the district shows that he did not intend to die without making full acknowledgment of his crime. He lies in a dying state, and will not probably last many days, and he has told his miserable story to the gentleman through whose agency his secret was discovered, and to the officers of justice and his clergyman.

"Several years ago he married a country girl, who eloped with a well-known gentleman a short time after the marriage, and for years led an abandoned life. Her husband discovered her after a while, passing as the wife of a gentleman of means and position, whom she had married under a false name.

"He took her back to his home, and for a time believed she was repentant and content, till he suddenly discovered, to his horror, that she was again corresponding with her first betrayer, and planning to go back to the life she had led under his auspices. He made sure of her falsehood by following her, and over-hearing what passed between the pair on the very day when they had planned to elope a second time together, and he stopped it by awaiting his wife's arrival to prepare for her journey, and strangling her.

"They had no servant living in the house, and by putting about the report that she had gone away, he was able to dispose of her in such a manner as to excite no suspicion.

"The quarry is a lonely place, and the fact of his digging in any fashion in the garden, which he was continually altering, was not in the least suspicious.

"Since the day when he deposited his guilty wife under the edge of the rose-bed he had led the life of a recluse, admitting no one into the house, though he employed assistants in his garden work.

"He expresses himself as thankful that the discovery has been made, and declares that he has lived the life of a lost soul ever since the awful night."

This was the story that John Dalrymple read over his breakfast, with the soft scent of the flowers wafted through the open window of his mother's morning-room.

"That was Mrs. Carew, mother, dear," he said.

"You remember her?"

"That beautiful girl that sang at that bazaar?"

"Yes."

"And married that young curate?"

"Yes."

"Poor fellow! How awful! Shall you tell him, Ned?"

"No. He is in Egypt now. Let it rest till he comes back. Ah! here is something else."

It was only a tiny paragraph, stating that since the first news had come of the discovery it was learned that the miserable husband of the murdered woman was dead also. He had been ill for a long time, worn out, doubtless, by remorse and the dread of detection.

The murderer and the poor remains of his victim were laid together in one grave, and the cottage and garden sold.

"The fittest ending to such a story!" Edward Dalrymple said, when he heard of the final disposition of things. And Jocelyn Carew, when he came home from his long trip abroad, stouter in body, and calmer and comforted in mind by the great healer, Time, said the same.

[THE END.]

THE "deadly" upas tree is fairly large, with a thick, dark bark, which, when cut, gives forth an oozy, milky fluid. The liquid is used for arrow poison by the natives. The terror of the jungle is the rafflesia tree. When cut with an axe a shower of milky fluid comes forth, and wherever it touches the skin it is agonising in effect.

SIR RUPERT'S WILL.

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CHAPTER I.

INGRAM CHASE is in W-shire, a fine old red brick mansion, with stone drawings to door and windows, and an air of antiquity about it much greater than the comparatively recent date of its erection would seem to warrant, for it was built in the reign of Charles the Second; and it was to some caprice on the part of the "merry monarch" that the honour of a baronetcy came to be conferred on one Stephen Ingram—less, it is supposed, for any particular merit of his own than that he chanced to be the father of an extremely pretty daughter, who was maid of honour to Katherine of Braganza, and whose bright eyes rendered her a special favourite of the kings.

The family was, and had been for centuries, a very rich one; the lands of Ingram Chase, broad and fertile, sloped down to the beautiful Severn, whose silver tide rolled through their midst. The park was extensive and well-timbered, and boasted an avenue of gigantic elms that were said to be the finest trees for miles round, and in all W-shire there was not a man more highly esteemed, more deeply respected than he who now lay on a bed of sickness from which it was feared he would never rise—Sir Rupert Ingram.

Outside the warmth and glory of the sunset fell over the pleasant landscape, touching the tops of the chestnuts, whose spiral columns of blossom were in all the perfection of their pink and white beauty, and making the distant Severn look like molten gold as it flowed along between its green banks; the lilacs were flowering in the shrubberies; laburnums were drooping their yellow tresses, that awayed with graceful languor at each touch of the soft west wind; tulips and hyacinths, narcissi and pansies made patches of colour and sweetness in the grim old Dutch garden, with its stiff box borders, and dense yew hedge cut into arches. All was peaceful and beautiful, full of the promise of the spring-time, and breathing faint whispers prophetic of the gracious approach of the dawning summer.

Within it was very different. Doors were closed, windows shrouded; the servants stole about on tiptoe, casting anxious glances at the room where their master lay, and speaking to each other in subdued undertones, and with mysterious shakings of the head that might either be taken to signify sorrow, or a melancholy pleasure in a state of affairs in which all domestic arrangements were turned upside down, and household duties might be safely neglected in favour of gossip.

The Baronet's room was large and lofty, and furnished with antique furniture, strictly in accordance with the fashion of the house itself; the windows were hung with dark velvet curtains, as was also the bed, but the drapery of the latter had been looped back, in order that its occupant might the better see the girlish figure seated in a big arm-chair, close by his side—an arm-chair large enough to hold two such slender forms as hers.

There had been silence for some time—a silence broken only by the sick man's irregular breathing, and the faint cadences of a black-bird's song that came in through the open window from the shrubbery below. Presently the Baronet opened his eyes.

"Mildred!" he said, and the girl turned round instantly, and bent her head towards him.

"What time is Dr. Cartwright coming?"

"He said he should be here at eight, and it is half-past seven now. Do you feel worse—would you like me to send for him?"

The Baronet shook his head in a faint negative.

"No, I feel rather better and stronger—the last flicker of the taper before it expires," he answered, raising himself on his pillows, and tightening his clasp of her fingers, while he let his eyes rest on her face—the fair, delicate face of a girl in her earliest youth, for she was not yet twenty. "I am quite aware that neither

Cartwright or any other doctor can do me good now—the sands of life have ebbed too low—but though my body may be weak my brain is still as clear as ever, and lying here I have been thinking of many things—chiefly of you."

She pressed her fresh young lips to his withered hand as it rested on the counterpane.

"You have thought of me always—ever since I knew you," she murmured, in a low tone. "My great regret is that I have never been able to repay your kindness as it deserved."

A shadow flitted over the sick man's wasted, but still fine and patrician features, and he sighed.

"My dear, I am afraid I have not been kind to you, and it is that fear which comes upon me with the greatest bitterness now. I acted, as I thought, for the best; but, after all, I question whether it did not savour of cruelty to bind your fair young life to my old and faded one, instead of leaving you free to accept and bestow that love which is youth's peculiar heritage. In making you my wife before you knew your own heart I did you a wrong, whose magnitude I never suspected, but my death will atone—surely it will atone!"

He sank back on his pillow half-exhausted by the vehemence with which he had spoken, and she poured out a little brandy, and after diluting it, gave it him in a spoon.

"If," she said, very earnestly; "if this idea has given you, or still gives you, any pain, I beseech you to put it away, for, believe me, you are wrong! You have been, as you are now, my best friend, to whom I owe all I have in the world, and however hard I might strive, I should never be able to tell you my appreciation of your goodness, much less repay it as it deserves. What should I have done ten years ago, when I was left an orphan, if you had not sent me to school, and treated me in every way as if I had been your daughter?"

"My daughter!" he repeated. "Yes, that is just the point. If you had continued in that relationship towards me all would have been well, but last year I was so afraid you would marry that Captain Liston—a mercenary cold-hearted rascal, who was counting on the fortune I might leave you—and so, to save you from him—and maybe from a selfish wish to keep you near me—I persuaded you to become my wife."

"You need have no fear," she said, a faint flush colouring her cheeks. "Captain Liston was never more to me than the veriest stranger."

He looked at her curiously.

"Then you have not been what the world calls 'in love'?"

"No," she answered, with a perfect frankness that was sufficient guarantee of her good faith; "the only person I have ever cared for, excepting my father, is yourself."

There was silence again. The ticking of the baronet's chronometer and the trill of the black-bird's song were the only sounds audible until Sir Rupert spoke once more.

"You will be a young widow, Mildred—barely nineteen; and you will have no lack of suitors, for you will be the richest woman in the county. I have made a will, leaving nearly all I possess to you."

She started violently, and clasped her hands tightly together in her eagerness that was purely involuntary.

"That is a point on which I wish to speak to you," she said, steadying her voice by an effort. "Hitherto I have not dared to mention your cousin's name, but it seems to me the time has now come when it would be cowardice on my part to keep silence. I want you to think of him kindly—to remember he is your nearest relative—and to forget that quarrel which took place between you so many years ago."

Sir Rupert's brow darkened, but he checked the angry retort trembling on his lips as he saw her imploring face.

"When we quarrelled, Roland, not I, was in fault; and you will recollect he has never made any overtures towards reconciliation since."

"I recollect nothing but that he is your next-of-kin and rightful heir," she said, steadily. "And if you were to leave me the money that,

to all intents and purposes, should be his, you would make me something more than miserable."

He looked at her with piercing intentness. "Do you mean this? Is it really your wish I should constitute Roland my heir?"

"It is my greatest wish—my most fervent desire!" she answered, truthfully. "You have often told me to ask you to do something for me; and hitherto I have not complied, because your generosity left me nothing to wish for; but now I want to take you at your word, and ask a favour. It is that you leave me only just enough to keep me from poverty, and give the rest of your money to Captain Ingram."

He waited some time before answering. His eyes closed, and his brows knit together, as if in meditation. Then he said,—

"Very well, it shall be as you desire. Send a servant for Selwin, and tell him to come at once, and then he shall draw up a fresh will without delay."

Lady Ingram only waited to give him another teaspoonful of the brandy before gliding from the room and despatching a groom with a dog-cart to fetch the lawyer from the village, which was about a mile distant. Then she returned to her post by her husband's bedside, where she sat holding his hand while the sun sank lower and lower till his rim touched the horizon, and the lovely western colours melted into the soft grey shadows of evening.

Not a word was spoken by either. The Baronet seemed sunk in a deep reverie, while his young wife's thoughts took a retrospective sweep over his past years.

She was recalling how she and her artist father had wandered about from one continental city to another, leading a careless, varied, Bohemian sort of existence that was alternately luxurious and sordid, according to the sale of her father's pictures, and the consequent state of his finances.

As a rule these were not flourishing, and it was at a very early stage in her career that poor Mildred had to face that most difficult of social and arithmetical problems—how to make both ends meet!

On some of these scenes she could look back with pleasure—the lollings in quaint old Flemish cities, under the shadow of grand cathedral arches, the gay boulevards of Paris, the green beauties of the lovely Rhine river—all these were pleasant reminiscences; but there was a dark side to the picture, and from that she turned with horror, for upon the artist had fallen the terrible vice of drink, and his hateful influence had sapped his strength, taken the light from his eye, the cunning from his fingers, and finally reduced him to a lamentable state of poverty from which Death came to release him.

In the last stage of his illness the thought of his daughter, alone and unprovided for in a world whose heartlessness he himself knew but too well, was a source of constant anxiety to him; and at last he wrote to one of his old college friends, Sir Rupert Ingram, and asked his help on her behalf.

His appeal met with a ready and generous response. The Baronet happened to be in Paris, and hastened to his former companion's bedside, where he arrived just before the artist drew his last breath; and then he took upon himself all arrangements for the funeral, and subsequently sent little Mildred to one of the best schools in Brussels, where he defrayed the expenses of her education until she was seventeen, and then had her brought to Ingram Chase, where she had remained ever since.

His kindness towards her had been unvaried, his solicitude that of a father; and when he had brought her to become his wife she had said "yes" as she would have said if he had asked her to go to the other end of the world, for the one great object of her life was to repay, as well as she could, the debt she felt she owed him; as at the altar she made the promise to "love, honour, and obey," she registered a mental vow equally solemn and binding to the effect that no effort should be spared on her own part in fulfilling the duties of a most loving wife, and that resolve she had honestly kept.

She had been happy enough at the Chase as its

fair young mistress, idolised by everyone with whom she came in contact, and reigning like a queen by right divine of her youth and beauty, and only one cloud darkened her horizon.

Sir Rupert's sole remaining relative was a cousin, almost thirty years younger than himself, who was now on his way back from India, where he had been stationed with his regiment. He had not kept up a correspondence with his uncle, for they had quarrelled through some fault of his early manhood, and no reconciliation had taken place between them, so he was not yet aware of the Baronet's marriage, and the consequent chances of his own disinheritance.

Mildred, morbidly conscious of the difficulties of her position, had imbibed a certain dread of this cousin, and looked forward to his arrival in England with feelings the very reverse of pleasurable.

Just in all her instincts, she recoiled from the idea of Sir Rupert's wealth descending to her, while he whom she regarded as its rightful inheritor was passed over in silence; but up to the present time she had been withheld from mentioning the subject by a very natural delicacy that only yielded to the pressure of the Baronet's own words.

"Thank Heaven, he sees the matter in its true light at last!" she murmured, as she sat watching him, and thinking to herself how much better he looked than he had done a few hours ago; and yet even as the thought came, Longfellow's words involuntarily flashed across her memory,—

"Tis but the rest of the fire from which the air has been taken;

'Tis but the rest of the sand when the hour glass is not shaken.

'Tis but the rest of the wind between the claws that blow.

'Tis but the rest of the tide between the ebb and the flow!"

By-and-by there was a knock at the door, and a minute later it was opened to admit two gentlemen—Dr. Cartwright and Mr. Selwin, the lawyer, who had driven over post-haste in answer to Mildred's urgent message.

"You have arrived at an opportune moment," said the Baronet, languidly, to Dr. Cartwright. "I am about giving instructions to Selwin to make my will, and you may as well remain here the while, and witness it when it is finished. Mildred, will you leave us for half an hour?"

She rose, and then hesitated a moment.

"You are sure you are strong enough to bear the fatigue!" she said, doubtfully.

"Quite, and if it is to be done the sooner the better; so go and get a little rest."

She made no further demur, but left the room, the door of which was held open for her by Mr. Selwin, a short, droll man, with wiry hair and keen, grey eyes which looked at her rather distrustfully as she went out. Mr. Selwin, besides being a friend of Rowland Ingram's, was a cynical disbeliever in womanhood generally, but he looked with especial disfavour on this particular member of the sex, who had contrived to fascinate the Baronet by her arts and beauty, and who, he had small doubt, had no other than mercenary motives for her marriage.

Outside, on the landing, Mildred found herself face to face with a woman of about twenty-eight, dressed in a black gown, and wearing a white muslin cap and apron—both rather coquettish in their affectation of simplicity. It was the lady nurse Dr. Cartwright had insisted on having to aid Lady Ingram in tending her husband, and sharing her night vigils. The young wife had objected at first, and even now she was hardly reconciled to the intrusion; for, strange to say, she had taken a curious dislike to this Miss Pedley, which all her efforts were powerless to overcome.

And yet, looking at the nurse as she stood there, a slim, slight figure with drooping grey eyes, and hair of that nondescript shade that her friends would have called golden, her enemies sandy, there seemed nothing in her appearance calculated to provoke unfriendliness. Indeed, when those pale grey eyes lighted up, when that white skin was flushed with the bright scarlet that emotion sometimes brought there, Louisa

Pedley might have been called pretty—certainly attractive.

"You need not go into my husband just yet," said Mildred. "He is engaged in some business transactions with his lawyers."

"When shall I return to my post, then?" asked Miss Pedley, flashing a rapid glance at her from under her gold-fringed lids.

"Not until I call you."

The nurse bowed, and turned away, while Lady Ingram passed into her own room, which was opposite the sick chamber. It was a luxuriant apartment, furnished with pale green chintz, over which many rosebuds climbed in a pattern as pretty as it was bewildering. The walls were hung with the same; and the toilet-table was a perfect marvel of dainty appointments, laden with crystal vases, and essence boxes, and cut-glass scent bottles.

As a matter of fact Mildred was very tired—nay, almost worn out with the fatigue of watching which had kept her without sleep for the last forty-eight hours; nevertheless, fearful lest her husband might require her presence, she determined not to lie down, but drew an easy chair close up to the window, and leaned back in it while the soft, west wind, perfume laden, swept across her face, stirring the light rings of hair, above her temples, and bringing with it a certain sense of soothing calm. But nature was too strong for her, and before she had been there very long her eyelids closed, and she sank into the deep slumber of exhausted youth.

She awoke suddenly, and with a start, to find Miss Pedley bending over her.

"Lady Ingram, wake up!" exclaimed the nurse, shaking her arm. "Come to your husband now—at once."

Mildred needed no second bidding, and in another moment was bending over the pillows, whereon rested a calm, still face, whose rigid pallor struck her with awe.

"Sir Rupert!" she said, in a low hushed tone, touching his cold hand with her warm, young fingers. "My dear husband—"

He did not answer. The kind voice had spoken its last sentence, the kind eyes banded their last glance; and without a murmur of pain or regret, in the solemn silence of the May night, Sir Rupert Ingram had yielded up his soul to his Maker's keeping.

CHAPTER II.

AND so the Baronet's body was laid to rest in a grim old family vault in the village church, while the sunlight fell in gorgeous patches of brightness through the stained-glass windows, and nature revelled in the beauty of a lovely spring day. Afterwards, those who had assisted at the funeral—mostly neighbours and friends of the deceased Baronet—assembled in the library of the Chase to hear the will read; and at Mr. Selwin's especial request, Mildred herself was there, looking very pale and fragile in her sweeping, black robes as she sat near the window, with Miss Pedley on a low chair at her side.

Mr. Selwin, attired in a decorous suit of mourning, and having before him a whole array of letters and papers, stood up with document in his hand, and cleared his throat preparatory to speaking.

"I have here a deed which I am forced to regard as the last will and testament of my lamented client," he said, in tones of slow deliberation that nevertheless expressed considerable anxiety; "but, before reading it, I think I shall be only doing my duty in making a slight statement. Last Monday evening I was sent for to draw up another will, whose tenor was very different to this one, and after I had written down Sir Rupert's instructions as briefly and succinctly as I could, he affixed his signature, which was witnessed by Dr. Cartwright and Stone, the butler. I then requested my client to let me take possession of the will so as to secure its safety; but he declined, and put it under his pillow, saying he wished to think over it. Afterwards Dr. Cartwright and I left the sick-room, in accordance with the express desire of Sir Rupert, who declared he felt much better, and

desired to be alone, and it was then about eleven o'clock. Shortly before twelve, Dr. Cartwright—who had been having supper with me in the dining-room—went upstairs to see how his patient was, and then he found him, as he first of all imagined, asleep; but on examination discovered that he was dead, and Miss Pedley thereupon called Lady Ingram, who had been in her room during all this time. As it happened, I was the next person to enter the baronet's apartment after Dr. Cartwright, and my first action was to look for the will; but though I searched thoroughly, though I left no hole or corner unexamined, all my efforts were futile, for the documents had disappeared as completely as if it had never existed!

He paused a moment and looked round. All the company regarded him with keenest attention, and it was evident followed his narrative genuinely interested.

"Such a thing as a will could not go without hands to take it," he continued; "and as my client had not the strength to leave his bed, and there were no scraps of torn paper about, it seemed clear some one must have stolen it. I therefore made inquiries as to who had entered the room between the hours of eleven and twelve; but their result only plunged the matter in deeper mystery, for the butler says that, after witnessing his master's signature, he went into the front hall, and instead of going to bed, sat in an armchair so as to be in readiness if he should be required. Now in order to get to that wing of the house where Sir Rupert's room is situated one would have to pass through the hall, and Stone declares most positively that no one did so. Dr. Cartwright and I were together all the time, and Lady Ingram, it seems, was in her room, which is exactly opposite her late husband's."

The inference to be drawn from the lawyer's last sentence was palpable enough, and a deep blush rose to Mildred's cheek as she felt all eyes turned upon her.

"I am not in a position to say more than that I have never seen the will," she observed, with a certain dignity in her voice.

"I suppose you have not a draft of the missing document, Mr. Selwin?" asked Mr. March, one of the guests.

The lawyer shook his head.

"No; but I have a perfect recollection of the terms in which it was couched, and it seems to me I cannot do better than repeat them, if only in justice to the memory of my late client. He left a thousand a-year to his wife, several small legacies to different servants, and the rest of his property, real and personal, to his cousin, Captain Rowland Ingram."

There was a dead silence, and the visitors exchanged significant glances. They were for the most part men past middle age, landowners, country squires given to look upon the breeding of prize oxen and fat pigs as the highest object of life, and with very little sympathy to spare for romance. When their old friend, Sir Rupert, had married his protégée, they shook their heads sagely, quoted one or two proverbs, and confided to each other the melancholy fact that the Baronet had made a fool of himself. Naturally they were not inclined to regard the girl who had bewitched him with any particular degree of favour, and it seemed clear enough to all that there could be no moral doubt as to her connection with the disappearance of the will.

Mildred, young as she was, was yet observant enough to know in what direction their suspicious were tending, and to see as well how terribly circumstances were against her. She grew whiter and whiter, and Mr. March, who was, after all, a kind-hearted man, felt his heart relenting at the sight of her loneliness and youth.

"Perhaps," he said hastily to the lawyer, "Sir Rupert altered his mind about the will, and destroyed it himself. Dying men are subject to strange caprices sometimes."

"That is the hypothesis on which I am acting; although, candidly, I must confess I think it a very improbable one," answered Mr. Selwin.

"True, there was a lamp burning on the table at the bedside, but there were no traces of burnt paper about, and such negative evidence seems to

me strongly against the supposition. However, as we cannot find the last will, we are forced to fall back upon the former one, executed immediately after Sir Rupert's marriage, and that I will at once read."

It was short and to the point, and the relative positions of Mildred and Roland Ingram were exactly reversed from what they would have been had the later documents been forthcoming. He was left a thousand a year, and the residue of the property came to her.

As the lawyer ceased reading, Mildred rose, leaning her one hand on the table as if to support herself while she spoke; but what she intended saying was not destined to be heard, for the strain on her nerves, combined with previous fatigue and want of sleep, proved too much, and without a word she swayed to one side, and then fell on the ground in a dead faint.

When she recovered she was in her own room, Miss Pedley and her maid bending over her, armed with smelling-salts, aromatic vinegar, burnt feathers, and the customary paraphernalia of restoratives, all of which she put aside.

"I am quite well now," she said. "I need not trouble you to stay any longer."

The fact was she wanted to be alone, in order that she might think over her position, and decide on her future plan of action.

That she was most awkwardly situated she did not attempt to disguise from herself, for she had been tacitly accused of a crime which she had no means of disproving, and which would cast a shadow over the whole of her future life unless she could establish her innocence.

The evening was very hot, and here in her boudoir, the atmosphere seemed close and stifling. Mildred's longing to get out into the fresh air grew too strong to be resisted; and so, putting on a hat, she slipped quietly down-stairs and into the grounds, unseen by any of the servants, who were having a gossip on the other side of the house.

Not far from the Chase was a wood, through which a narrow path led, and here she betook herself, feeling pretty sure of being free from intrusion, for the public were not admitted within the enclosure. It was rather an unconventional thing for her to be wandering about alone on the evening of her husband's funeral, but Mildred knew very little of those small social laws of English custom, and it is to be feared, cared less. In this forest solitude, with the green dome of leaves above her head, and the thick velvet of moss beneath her feet, she could breathe more freely than when she was indoors; but the more she thought over the events of the day the more difficult it seemed to her to come to any sort of decision. That Rowland Ingram should inherit the Chase she was quite resolved, but if she caused a deed of gift to be drawn up immediately it would do nothing towards lifting the cloud which hung over her own honour.

"If I had but someone to advise me—to tell me what I had better do!" she exclaimed, involuntarily, as she walked on, feeling relief in the mere exercise, for it was the first time for weeks that she had been out of the house. An overwhelming sense of loneliness fell upon her. She had absolutely no friend, no relative. Sir Rupert had supplied the place of both, and now that he was gone she was utterly alone.

The wood was not a very extensive one, and, before long, Mildred had emerged from it, and was standing on the edge of a cliff looking down below to where a brook ran noisily along, bubbling and eddying amongst the stones that lay in its bed, and tossing up clouds of spray as it dashed over the waterfall a little lower down. The descent was a sheer one of nearly a hundred feet, and the girl shuddered slightly as she looked at those steep rocks, and thought to herself what the consequences of one false step on her own part would involve, for with characteristic daring she had taken up her position on the very edge of the precipice.

(To be continued.)

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TRAVELLERS who have returned from the heart of Africa and the Australian continent tell wonderful stories of nest-building people who inhabit the wilds of those countries. In the bushmen of Australia, we find, perhaps, the lowest order of men that are known. They are so primitive that they do not know enough to build even the simplest forms of huts for shelter. The nearest they could approach to it is to gather a lot of twigs and grass, and taking them into a thicket or jungle, they build a nest for a home, much as does a bird. The nest is usually built large enough for the family, and if the latter be very numerous, then the nests are of a very large size. Into this place they all turn and snuggle and curl up together like so many kittens. Sometimes the foliage will grow together and form a sort of natural covering, but there is never any attempt at constructing a protection from the rain and storms, and it is a marvel how they endure them. Where there is a particularly good piece of jungle for home sites it will be quickly appropriated for the purpose, and sometimes hundreds of these nests will be found together in the bush, as it is called. But though the bushmen of the Australian colonies are the very lowest in the scale of ignorance, they possess a rare instinct that equals that of many animals, and is in its way as wonderful as man's reason. It is almost impossible for them to be lost. Even if they be led away from their home blindfolded for miles, when released they will unerringly turn in the right direction, and make their way to their nest-home, and though these are all very similar, they never make a mistake.

FACETIE.

HE: "If we were not in a boat, I would kiss you." SHE: "Take me ashore instantly, sir!"

BOBBS: "Clothes do not make the man." DOBBS: "No, but many a lawyer has been made by a good suit."

CUSTOMER: "Mother wants a nice plump chicken, please." SHOPMAN: "Trussed!" CUSTOMER: "Oh, no; I'm going to pay for it!"

WILLIE: "Are you the nearest relative I've got, mamma?" MOTHER: "Yes, love; and your pa is the closest relative you've got."

MISS KITCHEN: "Really and truly, Miss Elder, did you ever receive a proposal of marriage?" MISS ELDER: "Well, I'm not married, am I?"

SHE (passionately): "Will you ever love another, dearest?" HE (wearily): "No, never, if I get out of this affair alive."

LILY: "Jack proposed to me while turning the music for me at the piano." ELSE: "Ah, I see; you played right into his hands."

WILSON: "I don't mean to reflect on your character at all, but—" NIXON: "Of course you don't. You're not bright enough to reflect on anyone."

"Was she a trained nurse?" "She must have been. She hadn't been on the 'Maine' a week before she was engaged to the richest patient."

MISS TIFTY: "My doctor says I ought to sit still as long as I can and not exert myself." MISS SEASON: "Well, that won't be so hard. You can still go to dances."

"She married him in order to be revenged on her rival." "Ah! Then vengeance was hers." "No. It only took two months of married life to convince her that vengeance was her rival's."

BACHELOR FRIEND: "You complain of the expense of a typewriter. Why don't you get your wife to do it?" HUSBAND: "I can't dictate to my wife."

HURRY: "Belinda, what makes you so crazy about Oriental rugs and draperies?" WIFE: "Why, the duster and duster they get the more Oriental they look."

HUSBAND: "Mary, now you're in a good humour, tell me why you don't blow up the girls as you do me!" WIFE: "Oh, there's a very good reason for that—they won't stand it."

PATIENCE: "Won't you ask her to sing for us? You know she'll never do anything that I ask her." PATRICE: "Then I'd rather have you ask her."

SHE: "Ma says she knows that when we are married we won't live so like cats and dogs as she and pa do." HE: "No, indeed. Your ma is right." SHE: "Yes, she says she is sure you'll be easier to manage than pa is."

WIFE: "Harry, my new frock is either perfectly stunning or else it is hideous." HARRY: "How do you know?" WIFE: "I met Edith Binks when I was out and she didn't even mention it."

MRS. CRIMSONBEAK: "Has Mr. Crimsonbeak got home for dinner yet, Bridget?" "No, mum." "I thought I heard him downstairs." "Sure that was the dog you heard growlin', mum."

BROWN: "I thought of buying that seaside property, but I'd like to get some information about the place from someone who lives there." SMITH: "Get your information from someone who used to live there."

"Life must be very monotonous for you," said the sympathetic friend. "Not at all," answered the Chinese Emperor. "I find a great deal of excitement getting up early in the morning to see whether or not I was assassinated the night before."

MISS NICE: "What do you think of the new woman, Mr. Fair?" MR. FAIR: "I detect the bold, shrieking creature. How much more lovable is the old woman, like you!" MISS NICE: "Sir!" He tried desperately to explain, but she would not hear.

FARMER: "Yes, I want a man. Are you a good jumper?" APPLICANT: "Jumper! Well, yes." "You could jump a barbed-wire fence without much trouble, I s'pose?" "Um—I s'pose so." "Well, that's all right, then; you'll do. You see some of our bulls is a little wild."

THEY were speaking of the heiress. "After she had married him," said the romantic girl, "I understand that she discovered she had thrown herself away." "After she had married him," returned the practical girl, "she found that she had thrown her money away, which is far more important."

WIFE: "Dear me, it's a rainy Saturday, and I'll have the children racing about the house all day and breaking things." HUSBAND: "What have you usually done on rainy Saturdays?" WIFE: "I have usually sent them in to play with Mrs. Jenkinson's children, but she has moved away."

"SOME people have very crude notions of the way it is permissible to act in a civilized country. What a disgusting thing the starting of that report of Cortley's death was!" "Yes, confound it! I went around for nearly half a day telling people what an excellent fellow he was before I found out that the report was untrue."

PAPA: "By the way, who is the lady that bowed to us as we left the carriage?" DOROTHY: "The one with the black silk skirt, the rose peacock, plaid silk waist, purple collar with silver clasp, tan coat, black hat with purple tips, carrying a silver-trimmed card-case?" PAPA: "Yes." DOROTHY: "I don't know. I just caught a glimpse of her."

JONES: "You don't mean to say you have made all these improvements yourself? I thought you were only a tenant." SMITH: "I am." JONES: "Well, if I were in your place, I would send for the landlord and let him see the expense you have put to on it." SMITH: "The landlord! Mercy! Don't let him know I have improved his property." JONES: "And why not?" SMITH: "He would raise the rent."

MRS. SPANKERS: "I wish to get a house in a quiet neighbourhood." AGENT: "Yes, madam; we can accommodate you. I have a vacant house in a street which is as quiet as a Sabbath morn all the year round. No barking dogs, no children, no nuisance of any kind." MRS. SPANKERS: "That's exactly what I want. How lucky I happened to come to you! How many rooms has it?" AGENT: "Ten." MRS. SPANKERS: "That's just right. We need a good deal of room. We have nine children. I hope there's space at the back for a dog-house. We have three."

"PARDON me," said the polite highwayman, "but I must ask you to stand and deliver." The coach stopped. The door opened with surprising alacrity, and a young woman with a very large hat stepped out into the middle of the moonlight. In her hand she held a small leather-covered box. "Here they are!" she said, cheerfully. "What?" said the highwayman. "My diamonds," said the lady. "I am an actress, you know, and—" The highwayman leaped upon his horse. "Madame," said he, removing his hat gracefully, "you must excuse me; I may be a highwayman, but I am not an advertisement."

A DRUNKEN man reeled in at the open door of a mission-hall, sank down on a back bench, and fell asleep. A temperance meeting was going on, and the minister, who was addressing an assembly of young total abstainers, asked all to stand up who intended to lead sober lives. They rose en masse. When they were again seated, the minister said: "Now is there anyone present who does not mean to live soberly and abstain from the accursed drink? If so, let him stand up!" The sleeper had just awoke, and, hearing the words, "Stand up," staggered to his feet. Looking round, he saw everyone seated but himself and the minister. "Well, sir," he remarked, amiably, "we seem to be votin' about somethin'. I don't know what it is; but you and me are in the minority!"

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SOCIETY.

THAT NICHOLAS has established a fund of £60,000 to relieve journalists and authors in distress, and to provide for their widows and orphans when they die.

THE Duchess of Saxe-Coburg and her daughters will, according to present arrangements, leave England at the end of the present month.

THE German Emperor has promoted the Grand Duke of Hesse to the rank of full General in the German Army. The Grand Duke Ernest, who entered the Army in 1839, was advanced to the rank of Colonel directly after the death of the Grand Duke Lewis, and he afterwards became General of Cavalry.

THE Emperor of Russia has issued a ukase positively prohibiting bacarat, which is no longer to be played within his dominions, even in private houses. Bacarat having been for many years the favourite game at St. Petersburg, the order has caused general consternation.

PRINCESS BEATRICE OF COBURG is fast growing up, of course, and it may be safely assumed that the question of her marriage is now being discussed. The Duchess of Coburg is a great believer in early marriages, and it is an open secret, too, that she has determined that all her daughters shall marry either reigning princes or those who will reign. So far she has carried out her intention, and now only Princess Beatrice remains to be wedded. Rumour asserts that she would not be averse to a German alliance that would ultimately give her youngest daughter the highest position of all her children.

MUCH interest attaches to the coming of the young Crown Prince of Germany on a visit to his great-grandmother, the Queen, this month. To begin with, it will be the Prince's first visit to this country as a young man; then, of course, it is extremely interesting that our beloved Sovereign should thus be able to entertain a great-grandson of almost marriageable age; and, finally, his coming may be the means of further associating him with the country to which his grandmother, the Empress Frederick, belongs. For the Crown Prince will go by special invitation on a visit to his great-uncle, the Duke of Connaught, and it is easy to divine to what this visit may lead to.

THE German Emperor not only made the pilgrimage of the age, but he intends to hand down a memorial of it for the benefit of future generations. He has commissioned Herr Ismael Gentz, the famous German painter of Oriental life, to execute a series of pictures commemorative of the Imperial visit to Palestine last year. These pictures, which will contain a hundred portraits of personages who formed the Kaiser's escort, will be placed in the National Gallery in Berlin, where there is already a large painting representing the Emperor Frederick's entry into Jerusalem. This picture was painted by the father of Herr Ismael Gentz.

THE Prince and Princess of Wales are to leave Marlborough House for the season on Monday, the 30th inst., accompanied by Princess Victoria, when they will proceed to Goodwood on a visit to the Duke of Richmond and Lady Caroline Gordon-Lennox. The Prince and Princess of Wales will travel from Victoria by special train to Drayton, and drive thence to Goodwood, and on Friday, August 3rd, they will leave after the races and proceed by special train from Chichester to Portsmouth, where they are to join the Royal yacht Osborne for conveyance to Cowes. The Prince of Wales is to stay in the Solent for about ten days, and will then proceed to Marlboro. The Princess will go to Denmark on a two-months' visit to King Christian at the château of Bernstorff, where the Dowager Empress of Russia, the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, and other members of the Royal Family are also expected. The Prince of Wales will probably return to England in time for Doncaster races, which begin this year on Tuesday, September 11th, and afterwards he will go to Scotland on his annual visits to Balmoral and Mar Lodge.

STATISTICS.

TOBACCO SEEDS are so minute that a thimbleful will furnish enough plants for an acre of ground.

THE difference between the tallest and shortest races in the world is 1ft. 4½ in., and the average height is 5ft. 5½ in.

A FAMOUS musician says that 50 per cent. of the Germans understand music; 10 per cent. of the French, and 2 per cent. of the English.

GEMS.

It is only by looking an evil fully in the face, neither magnifying nor hiding its real proportions, that we can obtain the requisite wisdom to avoid it, or the courage to vanquish it, or the fortitude to endure it.

THERE is nothing mendacious or mushy about genuine spirituality. It is strong, sane, and clear-eyed. Never for an instant does it part company with common-sense. In dignified, reverent, and reserved manner it lives its life, in which first things are kept first.

ACTIVE industry, at first painful and arduous, unfolds our powers, and comes to be the source of keenest satisfaction. Parity of thought, word, and deed, sought at first from a knowledge of its righteousness, comes at last to be the natural air which the spirit loves to breathe.

EDUCATION does not mean teaching people to know what they do not know. It means teaching them to behave as they do not behave. It is painful, continual and difficult work to be done by kindness, by watching, by warning, by precept, and by praise; but above all, by example.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CHOCOLATE CARAMELS.—Two cups granulated sugar, half-cup of milk, two ounces of butter, three ounces of grated unsweetened chocolate. Place in a saucepan over the fire and boil to a crack. Then add one teaspoonful vanilla and pour in shallow buttered pans. When cool cut into squares and wrap into buttered or wax paper.

HOME MADE GINGER BEER.—Put the rind and juice of two lemons in a large earthenware pan, with one ounce of sugar, which must be well bruised so as to extract all the flavour. Add one ounce of cream of tartar and three pounds of loaf sugar. Pour on them three gallons of boiling water, and when this is nearly cold, put in two large tablespoonfuls of brewer's yeast, or two ounces of compressed yeast—the latter must be put in a little basin with two teaspoonfuls of castor sugar, and worked with a wooden spoon till liquid, then added. Stir all well, cover it, and let it stand in a warm place till the next day. Then skim off the yeast and bottle at once, taking care to leave the sediment behind. Cork tightly, and in four days it will be ready for use.

OATMEAL SOUP.—Two carrots, one middling-sized turnip, three onions, three tablespoonfuls oatmeal, two ounces butter, one stick celery, two spoonful peppercorns, some parsley, two spoonfuls salt, ten breakfastpans water. Soak the oatmeal and put it aside. Slice the vegetables up finely, wash them very well, put the butter in the soup pot and let it melt, put in all the vegetables and let them cook in the butter, stirring often; don't let them brown; then put in the water, the peppercorns, and the salt, and boil for two hours. Then add the soaked oatmeal and boil for the three-quarters of an hour. Next strain the soup through a sieve, rubbing part of it through; return to the pot, add the parsley, very finely chopped up; simmer a few minutes longer and it is ready.

MISCELLANEOUS.

INDIAN RUBBER nails are a novelty in Germany. They are used in places where metallic nails would be liable to corrode.

A CURIOUS criminal law exists in Greece. A man who is there sentenced to death awaits two years before the execution of the sentence.

CHINESE bicycle riders are frequently seen in the streets of Hong Kong and Shanghai carrying an open umbrella and a fan, and in some instances with the handle-bars removed.

A MUSTARD POT which does not require the use of a spoon has been invented in Germany. The mustard is supplied through a little spout by pressure on a spring.

ELPHANTS have only eight teeth—two below and two above on each side. An elephant's "baby teeth" fall out when the animal is about fourteen years old, and a new set grows.

LAKE MORAT in Switzerland, has the curious property of turning red every ten years owing to the presence of certain aquatic plants which are not known in any other lake in the world.

SNAKES of all sizes abound in the Sumatra jungles. Monster lizards are there, measuring six ft. and seven ft. The house lizard is about twelve inches long, and makes a noise like the bark of a toy terrier.

A COMBUSTIBLE clay has been discovered. The working people in the suburbs of Baku make use of it as fuel. The clay is burned in the form of powder, and gives a bluish flame of great intensity. There is no sign of smoke.

ONE of the attractions of the Paris Exposition is a naval combat in miniature. It is situated just outside the fortifications, where a large basin has been constructed, containing ten thousand cubic metres of water, around which have been arranged suitable decorations representing the port of a large city. The miniature boats attempt to reach the city, but are repulsed by the fleet situated in the port, giving rise to a naval combat in which cuirassiers and torpedo boats go through their evolutions, with bombardment of the city or ports. The spectacle is viewed from a stand eighty metres long extending along one side. The small boats are an exact representation of the latest types of battle-ships; they are from four to five metres long, and are directed by a battery of accumulators and electric motors. Each boat contains one or more persons concealed in the interior, who direct the boat and carry out the necessary manoeuvres; to represent the discharge of the guns, blank cartridges are fired from a small gun or pistol. The signals or lights are represented by incandescent lamps distributed around the boat.

WHEN confections began to be concocted in England somewhere about five hundred years ago, they assumed a medicinal form. Apothecaries, whose potions were at one time very generally supposed to be efficacious just in proportion as they were horribly nasty, took to the newly imported sugar as a means of mitigating the nauseousness of their doses. They mixed their drugs with it and coated their boluses. That seems to have been the origin of the syrups and medicated candies, the cough drops and lozenges of one sort and another that are now so largely in demand. They were originally concocted by the doctors, and for many years all sorts of "lollipop" were medicinal only. Sugar was too dear, and the generality of the people were too poor to permit of its being eaten for its own sake alone and as a mere luxury. A couple of centuries ago, however, there began to appear a new development of the apothecary's art. "Confections" began to be made more or less apart from any medicinal purpose, and merely because people liked them. The confectioner's business began to evolve as an offshoot from the profession of the apothecary and eventually became altogether a separate thing, though the common origin of the two is still indicated by the syrups and pastilles and troches prescribed by the doctors and "drops" and lozenges and other things sold among the sweet stuff of the confectioner.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

CLAUDE.—Lain's Nak is in North Natal.

ISAAC.—Lay the matter before the police.

S. C..—Consult a minister or school agency.

ALP.—Any good cycle dealer could supply you.

QUESTIONER.—No, but you might see a solicitor.

J. A..—A widow is not responsible for the maintenance of her stepchildren.

H. R..—Of course you can hold him to his agreement, and enforce payment.

DOCTRINAL.—The proper way is to introduce the gentleman to the lady.

B. H..—We know of no course of study. Why not ask someone in that occupation.

DISAPPOINTED.—The only advice we can give is to take them back to the manufacturer.

V. O..—Remove the slats, and wrap the ends of each in paper; then wedge them tightly into place.

A. H..—Put into cold water and slowly bring it to boiling point, and keep it simmering for an hour.

GERALDINE.—To renovate jet trimming brush well with a soft brush, and polish with a piece of velvet.

MAY.—There is nothing better than rosewater and glycerine, or camphor and lard, called camphor-ice.

MABEL.—It would be perfectly proper for you to write to the young man asking for an explanation, which is certainly your due.

A. F..—The object of toasting bread is to convert a portion of the starch into dextrin, thus making it a partly digested food.

HOUSEWIFE.—Hot water in which soda has been dissolved should be poured down every day, and some disinfectant every few days.

A. J..—The oxalic acid alone will do prepared in the way you propose, and diluted with water, but once it has done its work, sponge it out.

SWEET MARIE.—We know of nothing that will make the hair curly, save the use of crimping irons. The effect, of course, is only temporary.

LAURA.—Ink stains in linen can be removed if they are first washed in a strong solution of salt and water, and then sponged with lemon-juice.

MONTAGUE.—Blucher upset Napoleon's calculations, and his moral influence was useful to the British, but the victory was won before his arrival.

BOB.—The term "junior" in regard to clerkships means really a lower rank in the service; the applicant must be at least twenty-one years of age.

L. G..—A landlord can distrain for double rent upon a defaulting tenant who has refused to quit at the expiration of the legal notice given to him.

WORRIED OWN.—Cockroaches are difficult to destroy. Find the cracks and holes from which they come and scatter unslaked lime or borax around them.

MARY.—If you add a little lemon-juice to the water in which new potatoes are boiled they will be a good colour, and will not turn black after cooking.

A. F..—If your friend signed the will himself in presence of any witnesses who thereupon appended their signatures the document is legal and binding.

DISTRESSED MOTHER.—The best cure is cleanliness. Wash with soft soap, and dry thoroughly; so kill the animals the safest thing to use is starch or ointment.

L. D..—Fotobalstroom was the original capital of the Transvaal, and is still called that in legal documents, though Pretoria has long been the seat of Government and actual capital.

M. G..—Wash with hot water and washing soda to remove grease; when dry apply black ink evenly over with a brush or a piece of cloth; if necessary, when dry, give a second coat.

H. R..—The fact of the individual being, as you put it, a Government man or civil servant, does not disqualify him from taking part in any religious or social movement in the locality.

ELLA.—The most honourable course for you to pursue would be kindly, but decisively, to reject his addresses. It would be cruel to let him nurse a hope which you never intend to let him realize.

M. M..—First clean the steel in your usual way, then with a soft rag rub a little unslaked lard all over the bright part. Leave for half an hour, then wipe off the grease and polish with a soft duster.

MOLLY.—Scrub it thoroughly, using a stiff brush and plenty of soap. After scrubbing, turn on a hose, or pour water over to remove all soap; then leave in the air till dry, when it will look almost like new.

C. D..—Seeing the man is beyond reach, and may never reappear, we should say there is not the least chance of the money he owes being ever recovered; he could be sued, notwithstanding his long absence, if he came back.

UNHAPPY.—If your husband is prepared to provide you a suitable home, and you decline to accept the offer, you cannot compel him to support you in another home; on the other hand, if he threatens you and makes it impossible for you to live with him, apply to the justices for an order of separation and maintenance.

CONSTANT READER.—Special attention should be given to all buckets in which refuse is kept. After being emptied they should be washed out with strong soda and water, and should then be sprinkled with carbolic or some other reliable disinfectant.

D. H..—The word "epicure" is derived from Epicurus, a famous Greek philosopher, who has been regarded as teaching a doctrine of refined voluptuousness, and is generally applied to one who is devoted to luxurious enjoyments, especially to luxuries of the table.

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—The question is really too vague, but write Government Emigrants' Information Office, 31, Broadway, London, E.W., stating your desire, and we will send you a list of localities where men in your line are wanted will be supplied by return.

C. G..—Brush it with a paste made of spirits of turpentine and creosote powder. Brush it well on to the trimming, but be careful not to soil the material (an excellent plan is to sew stiff paper down each side). Let it dry on, and then brush off with a perfectly clean brush.

IGNORANT.—A morganatic marriage is one concluded between a man of superior and a woman of inferior rank, in which it is stipulated that the latter shall be entitled to neither the rank nor the possession of her husband; and this, of course, also applies to her children.

FLA.—A very simple, healthy, and admirable tooth powder is made of a combination of prepared chalk, powdered camphor, and orris-root. Sixpence worth fixed up your chemist will last long enough to convince you how white the teeth may be kept by this plain dentifrice.

B. R..—It is not at all necessary that the bridegroom should reside in the same place as the bride in order to have the marriage ceremony performed there; he will be pronounced or have his name published in the parish or district where he resides, the bride having this done for her in the parish or district of her residence.

AT SUNSET.

The sun sets, and the waters ebb away
Murmuring their low and everlasting song,
Out of the ocean silence deep and strong
Whose secret thought no mortal lips shall say;
And all the glories of the shining bay,
The myriad joys and sorrows that belong
To love and life where tender memories throng,
Breathe vague mysterious meanings through the day.

Here once hearts have beaten and shall beat,
Have met and parted winning no renown,
Unbrowned, whose years are all too fleet,
Whose tender brows stern time doth soon uncrown,
And we shall meet no more by strand or street
When next the sun sets and the tide goes down.

MADGE.—It is clear that such a marriage could only bring you unhappiness, as it is not likely the young man would keep a promise to his wife which he had failed to fulfil to his sweetheart. Do not let yourself be talked over by any one, or, we feel sure, you will live to regret it.

MICHAEL MILLY.—We think you should consider yourself very fortunate to have discovered the young man's true character in time. A man who could behave as he has done would scarcely make a desirable husband. The best advice we can offer you is to absolutely ignore his existence for the future.

E. E..—There is no way in which you can obtain an assisted passage to New South Wales; as for what may be possible by working out we are unable to say, but seeing many try that method we fear your chance of success is small; but apply to the captain of any sailing ship or second engineer in any steamer.

YEIDART.—We are afraid it is not possible for us to advise you, knowing nothing whatever of your capabilities or accomplishments, or in what way you would most profitably employ yourselves. In any case you should consider before giving up your present occupation, as there are many worse, less healthy, and that entail longer hours and fewer holidays.

ELLA MARY.—Mix a lump of whiting or prepared chalk with enough cold water to make a paste about as thick as thin cream. Add a few drops of ammonia, rub on with a soft rag, brushing it into small crevices, let dry, and at once brush off the whiting and polish with charcolé leather. Special brushes with soft bristles that will not scratch are sold for cleaning silver.

A. W..—Peel four ounces and extract the juice from them. Mix it with one ounce of soap, four ounces of fuller's earth, and a pint of vinegar. Roll well together. When nearly cold put it on to the scorched linen; allow it to dry in the air. Afterwards wash it with clean water. Should one application be insufficient, repeat the process.

CLARA.—The black spots in your face are caused by the perspiration lodging in the ducts of the skin, and being discoloured by exposure to the atmosphere. The remedy is to squeeze them out with the fingers, and then bathe the parts with weak brandy-and-water, or diluted spirits of wine. In your absences use a sponge, and dry with very soft towels. Coarse, hard towels are injurious to the skin.

G. E..—There is no trustworthy agency in this country through which situations in South Africa can be obtained, and if you go out at all it must be on the chance of finding something to do, which is rather a risky procedure in view of the state of affairs there just now; communicate meanwhile with Government Emigrants' Information Office, 31, Broadway, London, E.W.

REGULAR SUBSCRIBER.—Get a quite clean piece of rag, dip it in spirits of turpentine, and rub the collar thoroughly. Leave it for ten minutes, then rub well with the turpentine again, scraping very carefully, if necessary, to remove any loose dirt. Then sponge yet once again, but with alcohol or chloroform this time, and wipe till dry. Hang in an airy place for an hour or two.

E. R..—Sir Redvers Buller entered the Army in 1855; he served in China, also with Red River Expedition, in Ashanti, Kafir, and Zulu wars; Lord Roberts entered the Army seven years earlier than Buller, fought throughout the whole of the Indian Mutiny, commanded the Oudh field force in 1859; the Gandahar force at the end of same year, also in Afghanistan, and was commander-in-chief in India from 1885 to 1893; his service has altogether been much more lengthened, important, and we might also add, dangerous, than Sir Redvers Buller's.

PONDY.—The best way to remove oil from carpets is to pour turpentine over the soiled spot and rub it until quite dry with a piece of clean white flannel. If the stain remains obstinate, repeat the process over again. If the turpentine is applied at once to a greasy spot it will easily come out; but the longer it is allowed to remain on, the more difficult it is to remove. A simple way to remove grease spots from wallpaper is to hold a piece of clean blotting-paper over the spot and press a moderately warm flatiron over it. Repeat the operation until all the grease is out.

Q. 1-2. To make chocolate drops, take one cup of cream, and two cups of powdered sugar. Put in a vessel of boiling water, and boil until stiff. Into another vessel of hot water set a half-cup of grated chocolate, and let it melt. Roll the sugar into balls, and dip into the chocolate, and then set away to cool. 2. To candy nuts, take three cups of sugar and one cup of water. Boil until the sugar hardens when dropped in water, then flavour with lemon. The sugar must not boil after the lemon is put in. Put a nut on the end of a fine knitting-needle, and then turn the sugar on the needle until it is cool. If the candy gets cold, set on the stove for a few minutes.

OLD READER.—Saturating an article in salts of lemon, lemon-juice and salt, and drying in the sun, will efface most stains, including ink and iron rust, from white fabrics. If the fabric is coloured the acid will remove the colour as well as the stain. Oxalic acid is still more powerful for the same purpose. After using it wash the article, or the acid will injure the fabric. Ammonia will restore colour which has been taken out by acids. When, however, the acid has been used to remove a stain the spot often reappears, as well as the restored colour. French chalk is the specific for grease spots. Get the chalk in the stone, as the powder frequently is adulterated, and scrape it on the spot until it is well covered. Leave the chalk on until it absorbs the grease. Two or three applications often are necessary for the purpose. Brush the chalk off thoroughly each time before renewing it, and use plenty of it.

R. N..—The red nose is caused by the engorgement of the finer capillaries with which this organ is supplied. A magnifying glass shows the little vessels distended in parallel lines. They become so dilated and lose so much of their elasticity that the blood remains in them, filling and dilating them still more. The use of alcohol drinks flushes these vessels. Anything which interferes with the proper circulation of the blood in the body gives a like result. A catarrhal condition of the stomach, produced by indigestion and dyspepsia, acts in the same manner. The nose and the stomach seem to have a great sympathy with each other. The consumption of rich and greasy food, over-eating, and over-indulgence are written in the face, and in its most prominent feature. It is as if it waved the red flag of warning. Some writers attribute red noses to tight lacing, and also to wearing tight shoes. This is so. The constriction of any portion of the body is detrimental to the health, and the reduction of the girth of the waist by an inch or two, and the feet by a size or two will hurt the health. It is well to bear in mind, too, that lack of nutrition, as well as over-feeding, will make the nose red.

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